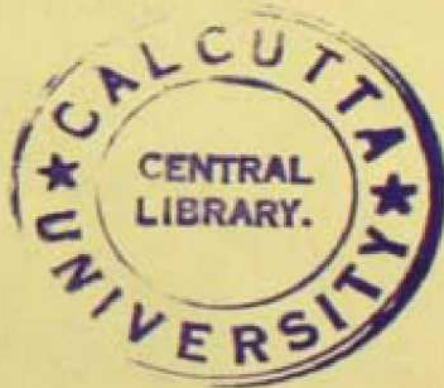




# THE GOLDSMITHS

A STUDY OF AN OCCUPATIONAL GROUP  
IN CALCUTTA

Dr. DEB KUMAR BANERJEE, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY,  
UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA.



1983

Price—Rs. 15'00



PRINTED IN INDIA

PUBLISHED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY PRESS,

48, HAZRA ROAD, CALCUTTA.

43CU 3315

© CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY

GS 1667

PRINTED BY UMA BASAK, AT NARAYAN PRESS  
107/2, RAJA RAMMOHAN SARANI,  
CALCUTTA-9.

*To*  
*My Wife*  
*Sm. Krishna Banerjee*



## PREFACE

In the pages that follow, I have tried to present a vignette of the goldsmiths as an artisan community and of goldsmithy as a craft. As a part of that endeavour, I have dwelt on the various facets of the socio-economic life of the goldsmiths, the technology and the economics of the craft, and the changing fashion in gold ornaments. I have for several months studied the goldsmiths at work, mixed with them, ascertained their attitudes to different social and cultural issues. The chapter on the goldsmiths of the northern fringe of Calcutta is the outcome of a field work done by me in that part of the city. The chapter incorporating some case studies is also a product, or rather a by-product, of that field work. The other chapters are based on material gathered from published works dealing, *inter alia*, with goldsmithy, supplemented by my own observation and information obtained from knowledgeable persons. The main focus of the study is on the goldsmiths of Sinthee, Dum Dum, Baranagar and Cossipore areas of Calcutta, but I have tried to place the micro-level study against the wider backdrop of goldsmithy in Bengal, and, to some extent, India as a whole.

'The Goldsmiths' is a study of an occupational group, and naturally it belongs to the genus of economic sociology, or, more specifically, to the sociology of occupations. So far as I know, this is the first sociological study of this occupation in India. As such, there was nothing to compare my findings with, nor any opportunity to grow wiser by noting the mistakes made by others. I had my quota of difficulties in making this study; but that does not, of course, constitute an excuse for its shortcomings. I know that, in abler hands, such a study could be more illuminating and fruitful. I feel, however, that notwithstanding its shortcomings, the study has shed at least a trickle of light on an occupation that was so long outside the pale of sociological investigations. And so, I hope, there is at least some justification in adding this monograph to the growing literature on the sociology of occupations.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not acknowledge here the unstinted co-operation and generous help that I received from the goldsmiths of Sinthee, Dum Dum, Baranagar and Cossipore areas. I am particularly indebted to Sri Brajen Manna, the president of the Sinthee-Dum Dum-Baranagar-Cossipore Swarna-Silpi Samiti, Sri Tarit Roy, the vice-president of the Samiti, and Sri Santi Karmakar, the secretary of the Samiti. Sri Brajen Manna lent his helping hand to me at every stage of



my work, and but for his help it would not have been possible for me to make the study at all. In the matter of data collection, I also received invaluable help from Sri Balaram Bera. Sri Narendra Bhusan Sarkar, the general secretary of the Bangiya Swarna-Silpi Samiti, was kind enough to enlighten me about many an aspect of the goldsmiths' movement and to bring to my knowledge many a fact about the state of goldsmithy in West Bengal.

I am profoundly indebted to the Calcutta University for undertaking the publication of this work, and I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Ramendra Kumar Poddar, Vice-Chancellor, and Sri Arun Ray, Pro Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs and Finance, of the Calcutta University. To Prof. Bela Dattagupta, Head of the Department of Sociology, Calcutta University, I am extremely grateful for her kind words of appreciation of this humble work.. My esteemed friend, Dr. Asis Ray, Reader, Department of commerce, Calcutta University, extended his helping hand to me whenever I needed it, and if the work sees the light of the day, it is, in no small measure, due to his friendly help. Sri Susanta Kumar Sengupta, Librarian University Central Library, my close friend and one time class mate, has been an unfailing source of encouragement to me. Sri Sunil Kumar Ghosal of the Accounts Department of the Calcutta University deserves heartiest thanks for typing the manuscript so well and in so short a time. I offer my sincere thanks also to those in charge of the Publication and Book Depot, Calcutta University, and to the proprietor and the staff of the Narayan press, Calcutta, for the pains and the care they have taken to make the work available to the reading public in a printed form.

Finally, I acknowledge with pleasure the profound debt I owe to my wife, Sm. Krishna Banerjee. She helped me in so many ways that it is indeed futile to try to specify on which counts I depended on her help. As matter of fact, this study was undertaken at her suggestion, and would hardly have been completed but for her insistence. My son, Anirban, has all along been keenly interested in the progress of this work, and its publication will naturally immensely gladden him.

Department of Sociology,

Calcutta University.

Dated 10.9.82

**Deb Kumar Banerjee**

## CONTENTS

	<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Page :</b>
I	Goldsmithy in Bengal ... ..	1 - 5
II	The Technology of Ornament Making ... ..	6 - 8
III	The Economics of Ornament Making ... ..	9 - 12
IV	The Changing Fashion in Ornaments ... ..	13 - 21
V	The Goldsmiths of the Northern Fringe of Calcutta—A Field Study ... ..	22—39
VI	Portraits of Goldsmiths—Some Case Studies ... ..	40—46
VII	Appendix—A ... ..	53—57
	Appendix—B ... ..	—54
VIII	Bibliography ... ..	55—56
IX	Plates	
	A. Some Bengali Ornaments	
	B. Goldsmiths' Tools and Implements	
	C. Goldsmiths at Work	



## CHAPTER—I

### GOLDSMITHY IN BENGAL

Goldsmithy is one of the traditional artistic crafts of Bengal through which Bengali culture has eloquently expressed itself. Gold, which is the basic material with which the goldsmith works has a special meaning for Bengal and Bengalis. According to Sudhansu Kumar Roy,<sup>1</sup> the very names *Bānglā* and *Bāngālī* are derived from the Telegu word *Bāngāra* (or *Bāngālā*) which means gold. In support of this theory, Roy points out that near about the Kolar goldfields and in other parts of Telengana, there are a number of villages called *Bāngālā*. The city of Bangalore, he adds, is a European corruption of *Bāngālāru*, meaning 'city of gold' in Telegu. In Rajasthan, women use a particular type of gold bangle known as *Bangri*. The English word 'Bangle', meaning an ornament worn round one's arms above the wrist, is most likely to be a word borrowed from an Indian language, and has its root in *Bāngālā*, a corrupt form of *Bāngāra* or gold. In the 'Periplus', we find that there were gold mines near the mouths of the Ganges and that there was a gold coin called *Cultis*. It is probable that the name of the place Kulti is derived from this *Cultis*. There are many places in Bengal, such as Kānchannagar, Sonārpur, Sonāmukhi, Sonābere, etc, the names of which leave no doubt that once gold played an important role in the economic life of the inhabitants of these places. Most probably goldsmithy was once a flourishing cottage industry in these villages and towns. It is also significant that the name of the capital in medieval Bengal was Karna Subarna. Old Bengali literature is replete with references to gold ornaments of various sorts.<sup>2</sup> The stone sculptures of the Sena and Pala periods furnish evidence to the fact that gold ornaments of exquisite beauty were manufactured by Bengali craftsmen in so remote a past. It is clear, thus, that goldsmithy has continued to be inextricably connected with Bengali culture for ages.

The original goldsmiths of Bengal, or the Swarnakāras, were divided into four *thāks*, namely—1. Saptagrāmi, 2. Bārendra, 3. Barāhi, and 4. Basundāri [the last one coincides with the Bāropāra samaj of

1. Roy, Sudhansu Kumar, 'The Artisan Castes of West Bengal and their Craft' in 'Census : West Bengal. The Tribes and Castes of West Bengal', p. 332.
2. Vide infra. pp. 22-23.



the Chitrakáras ]. These goldsmiths were organised in guilds. The main centre of goldsmithy shifted with time from one place to another, with the change of the centre of political and commercial importance. And the guilds also shifted and a samaj ring was reorganised and renamed from time to time according to the capital city of a particular period.<sup>3</sup> In course of time, people from various castes swelled the ranks of the goldsmiths, and besides Hindus, a number of Muslims took to this profession. Gradually, goldsmiths of particular localities specialised in particular branches of goldsmithy, and some areas won a reputation for a particular type of work. At present, there are about 80,000 goldsmiths in West Bengal. There are several thousand goldsmiths in Calcutta itself. Goldsmithy is localised in certain areas of the city such as Bowbazar, Garanhata, Baranagar, Cossipore, Sinthee, Dum Dum, Ballygunge, Bhowanipore, Taltala, etc. There are about 2,000 goldsmiths in the Bowbazar area. The number of goldsmiths in the Burrabazar area would be about 1,500. More than half of the goldsmiths in Burrabazar are non-Bengalees.<sup>4</sup> In the Sinthee, Baranagar, Cossipore and Dum Dum areas, there are about 1200 goldsmiths. The goldsmiths of different places in West Bengal, in Calcutta and moffusil areas, are noted for expertise in different branches of goldsmithy. For example, there is a village called Kharár in the Ghatal sub-division of Midnapur district which is famous for *nákáśi* work in *tágús*, *bálús*, etc. The goldsmiths of Sinthee, Dum Dum and Baranagar are experts in making chains. The goldsmiths of Domjur village in Howrah district are well known for stone-setting work.<sup>5</sup> Many goldsmiths of Domjur have left their ancestral village and are doing work in jewellery shops in other parts of India, particularly Bombay. There are also expert stone setters in Bhowanipore Kansaripara, Simla Kansaripara, and Burrabazar. The goldsmiths of Bhowanipore have the reputation of being experts in *miná* work. Though some particular places in Bengal are reputed for goldsmithy, the craft of goldsmithy is not confined to those places alone. There is not a single town in West Bengal which does not have at least a few goldsmiths in it. In many villages also there are goldsmiths who cater to the local needs.

The goldsmith community in Bengal occupies a distinct place in Bengali social life. Bengali women, like women in other parts of India, are fond of gold ornaments. But the tastes of Bengali women are differ-

3. Roy, Sudhansu Kumar, op. cit., p., p. 333.

4. These facts were supplied to me by Sri Narendra Bhusan Sarkar, General Secretary, Bangiya Swarna Silpi Samiti.



ent from that of women in other provinces. And this Bengali taste, rooted in Bengali culture, manifests itself, among other things, in the preference for certain patterns and designs of ornaments. Many of these preferred designs are drawn from *álpáná* art, a traditional Bengali mode of decorating the floor. The designs of Bengali ornaments also incorporate the patterns of *sholá* (pith) work, another distinctively Bengali art of decoration. Bengal has a distinct 'school of jewellery', with motifs drawn from traditional folk art like *álpáná* and *sholá* work, and Bengali ornaments faithfully reflect the familiar objects of Bengali flora and fauna, like pipal leaf, palm leaf, rice grain, lotus flower, fish, snake, etc.<sup>6</sup> Bengali women prefer a slightly reddish tinge in gold ornaments (imparted by adding a little more copper as alloy) whereas women of some other parts of India, like Rajasthan, prefer rather a whitish tinge (imparted by adding a little more silver and a little less copper to the gold). Without the artistic work done by the Bengali goldsmiths, Bengali culture would, clearly, be impoverished, and social and ceremonial life in Bengal would definitely lose much of its glitter and gloss. The goldsmiths' work may not be as essential to the economic existence of the Bengali people as the work of the blacksmiths or weavers or carpenters, but it is, nonetheless, an essential pre-requisite for the continuance of Bengali culture. Without ornaments to enhance the physical charm and to satiate the mental craving for social distinction, the Bengali women's, particularly middle class women's, world would be a void. It is impossible to think of a wedding in a Bengali rich or upper middle class family without thinking of a whole set of gold ornaments for the bride. In these days of sky-high price of gold, lower middle class families cannot, of course, afford to purchase a full set of gold ornaments for the bride, but the father of the bride has to 'beg, borrow or steal' to purchase at least a few gold ornaments for his daughter, and the failure to do so is regarded as the failure to perform a necessary familial and social duty. Poorer people, needless to say, cannot think of purchasing anything better than silver or rolled gold ornaments, costly gold ornaments being beyond their reach, and a section of the goldsmiths make silver and rolled gold ornaments to suit the purse of the poorer sections of Bengali society. Ornaments are not merely articles of luxury : custom and tradition have transformed them into almost a conventional necessity.

5. Ghosh, Biswanath 'Howrah's Pride', *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 31. 8. 79.

6. Vide infra, p. 30.



And the goldsmiths who supply this necessity have, thus, become an essential component of the Bengali social structure.

The goldsmith or *sakrá* beating small pieces of gold gently with a small hammer for shaping them into ornaments, is a familiar image in Bengali thought. The sound of the strokes of the goldsmith's hammer, onomatopoeically called *thuk-thák* in Bengali, forms the subject matter of two Bengali proverbs. One runs thus "The domestic cat of the *sakrá* household is not afraid of *thukhukuni*" (the *thukthák* sound of the goldsmith's hammer).<sup>7</sup> The other adage is "The *thukthák* of the *sakrá*, one [mighty] blow [from the large hammer] of the *kámár* (blacksmith)".<sup>8</sup> There are a few Bengali proverbs which present a clearly unfavourable image of the goldsmith, depicting him as a shrewd person who is an adept in fooling his unwary clients. One proverb says "The *dhopa* (washer-man) knows who is a pauper, and the *sakrá* knows who is a fool".<sup>9</sup> Needless to say, such uncharitable proverbs must have originated from the distrust of the non-goldsmiths for the goldsmiths. Possibly, it was thought that those handling such a precious metal as gold would be unable to desist the temptation of getting rich by duping their customers. All goldsmiths were not, however, affluent, and one proverb makes fun of the *sakrá* woman's (woman of the *sakrá* household) love of ornaments notwithstanding the acute poverty of her family. "The *sakrá* woman is pretentious, she wears *sámkhás* (bangle-like ornaments made of conch-shell, sometimes decorated with gold leaf) though there be no boiled rice (that is, food) in her home."<sup>10</sup> The fact that goldsmiths have found their way into proverbs proves that goldsmiths and their craft have long since become a part and parcel of Bengali social life.

Literature is said to be a mirror of social life. It is an enigma why Bengali literature which faithfully mirrors the life of various sections of Bengali society, like peasants, fishermen, weavers, etc. has so far not presented a single literary work on the social life of the goldsmith community. No wellknown Bengali novel or drama or short story brings the goldsmiths into limelight. Goldsmiths are at best assigned a very minor role in some Bengali writings, and in such cases they are usually depicted not as hard-working craftsmen creating things of beauty which are joy for ever, but as hard-hearted pawn-brokers out to

7. De, Sushil Kumar. *Báglá Prabád : Chcharhá O Chalti Kathá*. Proverb Number 8436.

8. *Ibid.*, Proverb Number 8439.

9. *Ibid.*, Proverb Number 8834.

10. *Ibid.*, Proverb Number 8437.



cheat people through shrewd manipulations. The artistic aspect of goldsmithy has not attracted the attention of the Bengali litterateurs. Nor have the Bengali writers been moved by the trials and tribulations of these artisans' lives. These could, however, easily form the staple of a literary masterpiece. Have the Bengali writers neglected the goldsmiths because their lives do not display that high drama which could make their social life a thematically acceptable subject for stories and novels? Or is it due to the fact that the writers could not form an intimate idea of the goldsmiths' lives because of the intricacies of the craft and the reticence of the craftsmen to open their minds to non-goldsmiths? Or is it the stereotype that presents the goldsmith as a person adept at cheating the customers, that made him unacceptable to the writers as a central character in their works? Frankly, I do not know the answer. But I do feel that the goldsmiths as an artisan group are not socially as unimportant a section of our society as to deserve this neglect.

The stereotype about the goldsmiths is plainly wrong, as most stereotypes are. A goldsmith is not usually a pawn broker; not usually a heartless person fattening on other people's misery. The goldsmiths of Bengal are, by and large, men of small means who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. The bulk of them are victims of social neglect, governmental apathy, and economic uncertainty. Their lives may be outwardly placid and uneventful. But the vicissitudes of their lives are no less upsetting than those of other working people. The goldsmith's life is dramatically poignant because of the contrast between the precious objects of joy he makes for others and the joylessness of his own self, between the glow and glitter of gold, ruby, emerald and diamond in his workshop and the dull and drab atmosphere of his home. His life is an alienated life. He is alienated from his products, from society, from his own essence as man. Tied to his tiny workshop and the fatiguing routine of unrelieved drudgery, the Bengali goldsmith sighs for a little solvency in his economic life, and a little recognition from society for his contributions. He is yet to get either. Will it be too much for him to expect that society should acknowledge its debt to him for bringing cheer to many homes, to womenfolk particularly, by stringing gold and gems into lyrics of matchless grace and beauty?



## CHAPTER—II

### THE TECHNOLOGY OF ORNAMENT-MAKING

The goldsmiths of different parts of India employ different techniques for ornament-making. In the same region, the techniques change with passage of time, and the techniques used today are not the same as they were yesterday. Notwithstanding these regional differences, and modifications, an attempt can be made to present an outline of the broad processes involved in ornament-making.

The goldsmith's work consists of several stages, and each stage has its own appropriate technique or techniques. Normally different categories of goldsmiths handle the material in different stages of ornament-making, and gain expertise in the techniques pertaining to that part of the work only. There is, in other words, an elaborate division of labour in the goldsmiths' craft. In some small towns and villages, however, it is not uncommon for a goldsmith to handle several stages himself, because there are no other goldsmiths to whom he could entrust other stages of the process, confining himself to one particular stage only. In metropolitan Calcutta, there is room for extensive division of labour because the number of goldsmiths is very large, and, as a result, here we find specialisation to be the rule among the artisans engaged in goldsmithy.

The first stage in ornament-making is naturally the procuring of gold and mixing alloy with it in a proper proportion to make the gold suitable for ornament-making. Pure gold is so soft that ornaments cannot be made unless it is alloyed with copper and silver. More copper is added if a reddish tinge is desired in gold, and more silver, if a whitish tinge is desired. The expert goldsmith knows in what proportion these three metals are to be mixed, and mixing is done in a crucible by using a blower. The molten liquid is poured into an iron plate with grooves of different thickness. When the molten gold solidifies, it takes the shape of gold sticks. The sticks are converted into gold foils or wires by using *pāt dalna* or *tār dalna*, two mechanical devices for pressing the gold sticks into foils or wires. If finer wires are required, the *janturi*, a perforated iron plate, is used. The basic material for making ornaments is now ready in the form of foils and wires, and the goldsmith can set his hands to making any ornament he likes, a necklace or an ear-ring, a bangle or a wristlet.

In the second stage in ornament-making, the gold foils and wires



are cut into required sizes, and the parts which go into the making of an ornament are prepared. The cut pieces of gold foils and wires are heated in a crucible to make them malleable, and the parts are then given desired shapes. The prepared pieces are joined together by soldering. If any designs have to be made on the ornament, the same is done with the help of dies, and a goldsmith has usually a variety of die-designs in his stock. The dies are made of brass, and these are prepared by a class of artisans who have specialised in die-making. The gold balls which dangle from some ornaments are usually prepared by a section of goldsmiths who specialise in making them. The ornament-maker gets the balls or *gulidanas* prepared by the ballmakers and fits them by heating to the ornaments which they are to embellish.

With the joining together of the parts of an ornament by soldering, the second stage of ornament-making is over. The ornament has already taken a shape and only awaits a few more processes to give it the desired beauty and finish. If the work involves engraving, the design is etched out by using nitric acid on the wax-covered surface on which the design is drawn by a sharp, pointed instrument. If the work involves embossing, it is sent to the embosser. The embossing or *miná* work is done by fixing coloured dusts on the surface to be embossed, in accordance with the design of colouring selected, through application of heat. If stones are to be set, it is usually sent to a stone-setter. He has to cut the precious stones to required size and shape, and fix them at appropriate places by twisting the sides of the indentations in which they are set.

When the ornament has gone through the engraving, embossing and stone setting stages, it is nearly finished. Only one or two more stages remain before it can be delivered to the customer. Most ornaments have to be chiselled and are sent to the chiseller or *chchilatwálá* for that purpose. The chiseller adds lustre to the ornament by cutting diamond-like-patterns on the surface with a chisel. The polishing is done by the polisher. The polishing is done either by abrasion in the polishing machine, or by treating the ornament in nitric acid to give it a glossy finish. With the completion of chiselling and polishing, the goldsmith's work is complete. All that remains to be done is to weigh the ornament in the balance to see whether it has lost more of its initial weight than the permissible loss of a certain proportion of the gold in course of the treatment it received in various stages. If there has been an undue loss of gold, it has to be added to the ornament before delivering it to the customer, and that is done by thickening it somewhere, without, of course, visibly disturbing the harmony of the design.



The tools and implements used by the goldsmiths are of diverse types and sizes. Some of the commonly used tools and implements are the following :—

wooden desk, wooden stool, hammer, anvil, file, crucible, die,  
blower, plus, cutter, weighing balance,  
machine for making gold foils (*pāt dalna*)  
machine for making gold wires (*tār dalna*),  
perforated iron plate for making fine gold  
wires (*janturi*), etc.<sup>1</sup>

Every ornament-maker must possess a set of these tools and implements if he is to set up a goldsmithy workshop. Of course, the more well-to-do goldsmiths have a richer collection of the necessary instruments than the less fortunate goldsmiths. The technology of goldsmithy, followed in India, is such that production of ornaments on a large-scale is rendered impossible, even if the owner of the workshop is an affluent goldsmith, and owns a large assortment of tools and implements. It is so because each of the stages of ornament-making requires careful handling by deft human hands, and power-driven machines cannot take over any of these operations from the working goldsmiths. The technological factor thus dictates the small size of the goldsmithy workshop. And the small size of the workshop, in its turn, exercises a decisive influence on the pattern of inter-human relations among the artisans engaged in this craft. Goldsmithy is a labour-intensive industry, and human skill-plays a more important part here than mechanical devices. Some of the mechanical devices now used by the goldsmiths are modern innovations. The goldsmiths of the early twentieth century had to work without some of the mechanical devices which goldsmiths use today. Thus, the technology of goldsmithy has changed in course of time. But the change has been slow and its magnitude has not been so great as to alter the basic processes of ornament-making. Goldsmithy in India continues to be an arduous work requiring a few simple tools and implements, a good eyesight and steady hands, a keen sense of proportion and beauty. The technology of goldsmithy can be mastered only with years of practice, and all the expert goldsmiths of today joined the profession at a very young age as apprentices. Needless to say, the reputation of goldsmithy as an artistic craft is the product of accumulated expertise gained through repetitive use of tested techniques generation after generation.

<sup>1</sup>. See Plate B.



## CHAPTER—III

### THE ECONOMICS OF ORNAMENT-MAKING

Goldsmithy as a cottage industry has a distinct place in West Bengal's economy. It gives employment to about 80,000 goldsmiths today, and, taking their families into account, several lakhs of people depend on it for their subsistence. Besides that, goldsmithy also generates income for several other categories of people in an indirect way. Among these are the black smiths who make the goldsmiths' instruments, the carpenters who make the wooden implements needed by the goldsmiths, the potters who make the earthen wares used in goldsmithy, and so on. Thus, the prosperity of goldsmithy benefits a very large number of people who are directly or indirectly dependent on it. The crisis of this industry, on the other hand, adversely affects not only the goldsmith community, but many other people as well.

The history of goldsmithy in Bengal in this century is the history of an once-flourishing cottage industry becoming crisis-ridden as a result of the far reaching consequences of a short-sighted governmental decision. The decision in question was the decision of the government of India in the early sixties to impose stringent restrictions on the use of gold for the purpose of ornament-making. On January 9, 1963, the Government promulgated the Gold Control Rules under the Defence of India Act making the possession of gold, except in the form of ornaments, without declaration illegal. The Rules provided that all ornaments made in the country in the future, whether from existing ornaments or gold in other forms must not have a purity exceeding 14 carats. The Government insisted that anyone, holding more than 50 grammes (nearly  $4\frac{1}{2}$  tolas) of non-ornament gold must make a declaration to the government within one month of the promulgation of the Gold Control Rules. The avowed objective of these governmental decisions was, of course, laudable. The government wanted to lower the internal gold price by reducing the internal demand for gold for ornament-making, and thus to increase the availability of gold for our pressing external requirements. The smuggling of gold into the country had indeed become a serious problem; and this new policy was expected to check this smuggling. The actual results, however, did not justify the expectations. Neither could the gold price be kept at a low level for long,<sup>1</sup> nor could the smuggling of gold be stopped. The new gold policy succeeded only in crippling the goldsmithy

1. See Appendix B.



industry and in throwing thousands of goldsmiths out of employment. With gold, the basic raw material of goldsmithy, becoming difficult to procure, and 14 carat ornaments failing to attract and satisfy customers, the prospects before the goldsmiths became dark. So great was their economic distress and mental agony that more than 200 goldsmiths in India committed suicide to escape the pangs of hunger.

Faced with such a grim situation, the goldsmiths all over India took to the path of agitation. The 'Akhil Bharat Swarnakar Sangha' came into existence in 1963.<sup>2</sup> As a result of this agitation, the rigours of the Gold Control Rules were gradually slackened. The making of 22 carat gold ornaments was restored. Goldsmiths were given licences to carry on their trade, and the licensed goldsmiths were given limited powers of purchasing gold for making ornaments apart from making ornaments out of the gold supplied to them by the customers or the licensed dealers in ornaments. But the facilities extended are not yet adequate, and, as a result, many goldsmiths have, in reality, sometimes to transgress the modified gold control rules, and act in an unauthorised manner. Such transgressions are inevitable so long as the governmental rules make it difficult for the goldsmiths to carry on their professional work in a smooth and legal way. There are complaints from the side of the goldsmiths of harassment by officials. There are official accusations of smuggling and illegal gold purchases by the goldsmiths. The net result is an atmosphere of suspense and suspicion, anxiety and animosity. This is certainly not congenial to the development and prosperity of goldsmithy as an industry.

Under the existing system of ornament-making in the city of Calcutta, the supply of ornaments comes through the jewellery shops, some of which are pretty big concerns. The owners of these shops are licensed dealers and they purchase the gold necessary for making ornaments. The goldsmiths who actually make these ornaments are not employees of these shops, but work on a piece-rate basis. The jewellery shop owner places order with a goldsmith and supplies the necessary amount of gold. The goldsmith is to get his remuneration at an agreed rate. It is the task of the goldsmith who gets the order, to make the ornament in his work-shop with the help of the *karigars* working in his goldsmithy. These *karigars* working in his workshop are virtually his employees, but legally they are 'self-employed,' goldsmiths. After shaping

2. Subsequently there was a split in the Sangha, and since the split, there are two all India Sanghas, each claiming to represent the Indian goldsmiths.



the ornament, he gives it to the chiseller or polisher or enameller as necessary, and these classes of goldsmiths get their remuneration at agreed rates from the ornament-making goldsmith who initially got the order from the jewellery-shop. There is, thus, an extensive division of labour, and the ornament that the customer buys from the jeweller's shop is the joint product of several hands. The goldsmiths who are the real makers of these ornaments, however, remain unknown to the customers, and if their work be of a high quality, that enhances the reputation of the jewellery shop from which the customers purchased the ornaments. The Calcutta goldsmiths rarely make ornaments for direct sale to the customers. In moffusil areas, the system of ornament-making is usually different, and the goldsmiths in those areas, particularly in small towns, make ornaments for actual customers instead of for big jewellery shops. There is another notable difference between Calcutta and moffusil areas. While in Calcutta specialisation is the rule in the goldsmithy industry, and ornament-making, chiselling, polishing etc are usually done by separate categories of goldsmiths, in moffusil areas these different stages are often handled by the same goldsmiths.

The outline of the prevailing system of ornament-making in Calcutta given above makes it clear that the thousands of goldsmiths working in the goldsmithy workshops here are 'self-employed' in name only. Actually they have to sell their labour to the owners of the well-known jewellery shops for a fixed rate of remuneration. In that respect, they are akin to the workers who work on a piece-rate basis and differ from other categories of craftsmen who earn their livelihood by directly catering to the needs of their customers. The goldsmiths differ from the industrial workers also in respect of their mode of existence. While the industrial workers do not own the tools of production, the goldsmiths who are owners of their workshops do own the tools of production, though the *karigars* who work in their work-shops do not. Again, while the industrial workers work together in hundreds within the same factory compound and often under the same roof, the goldsmiths work in hundreds of separate small workshops scattered over a wide area. These differences explain why the agitational programme of the goldsmiths does not develop into the economico-political dimensions of trade unionism.

An aspect of the economics of the ornament-making that deserves attention is the prevalence of extensive disguised unemployment in this cottage industry. The goldsmiths do not get adequate employment throughout the year. During a particular period, they may have more



work than they can cope with. But during the next, they may have to sit idle for want of any work. During the idle period, their income becomes negligible, and their misery during such periods is easily imaginable.

As a result of the Gold Control Rules many goldsmiths became fully unemployed in the early sixties. Since then some concessions have been made to them, in a half-hearted and halting way though, and, as a result, their economic condition today is not as bad as the introduction of the Gold Control Rules once made it. But the meteoric rise in the price of gold in recent times is fast pushing this industry towards another acute crisis. The costlier gold becomes, the more difficult it becomes for people to spare the amounts necessary to buy ornaments to satisfy their urge for fashion or to meet social obligations. And a fall in the demand for gold ornaments, needless to say, means a reduced income for the goldsmiths. There are, of course, two factors which may, to some extent, compensate this fall in demand from the buying public. One is the existence of a section of people with increasing stock-piles of black money, a section that is likely to buy more and more gold ornaments however sharply the gold price rises. The other is the possibility of exporting gold ornaments to other countries, particularly countries of the Middle East. That a small section of people continues to accumulate more and more black money, is an unfortunate but undeniable reality in India. And it is, of course, true that this section can and does purchase a good deal of gold ornaments to satisfy its craze for fashion (and also as an outlet for unaccounted for cash). But the future of an industry can hardly be mortgaged to the prospect of the continuance of the black money boom in the economy. As regards the export possibility, till now it is at best of marginal significance. The export market for Indian gold ornaments cannot be expected to expand so much in the foreseeable future as to free the goldsmithy industry from its dependence on the internal market. Hence, the sky-rocketing price of gold, however alluring for smugglers, will spell the ruin of the ornament-making industry unless it manages to thrive in extra-legal ways.

In fine, pressed between the fantastic rise in gold price and the alarming shrinkage in the demand for gold ornaments, the ornament-making industry is steadily heading towards a grave crisis. In human terms, what is at stake is the employment and livelihood of thousands of people. In cultural terms, what is endangered is an artistic channel through which the Indian mind expressed its sense of beauty for ages. Is it not high time for our economists and planners to find out a means for ensuring this age-old industry's survival and for our government to adopt that means before it becomes too late?



## CHAPTER—IV

### THE CHANGING FASHION IN ORNAMENTS

We do not know how old exactly the fashion of wearing gold ornaments is in our country. It is certain, however, that it is a very old fashion. In the Vedas, we find mention of golden *Shrak* (garland). In the Ramayana, there are references to the use of gold ornaments. In the *Ajodhyá Kánda* of that great epic, there is an indication that *Angada* and *Kundala* were made of gold. In the *Sundara Kánda*, we find that the golden *Kundalas* worn by the women of Lanka were decorated with diamond and cat's-eye. Old Sanskrit texts mention the following ornaments worn by Hindus in ancient times :—

**Ornaments for the head**—Mályá, Garbhak, Lalámak, Apir, Bálapáśyá, Pári-tathya, Hansa-tilak, Chura-mandan, Churiká, Mukut, etc.

**Ornaments of the ear**—Muktá-kantak, Kundal, Dwirájik, Karnapur, Karniká, Karnendu, Lalátika or Patra-páshya, etc.

**Necklaces**—Pralambiká, Urahsutriká, Devachchandaka, Guchcha, Gostan, Ardha-hár, Mánavak, Ekávali, Nakshatramálá. Bhramar, Sariká, etc.

**Arm Ornaments**—Keyur, Panchaka, etc.

**Bracelets**—Balay, Chur, Kankan, etc.

**Finger-rings**—Dwi-hirak, Vajra, Ravimandal, etc.

**Ornaments of the feet**—Páda-chur, Páda-kantak, Pádapadma Kinkini, Nupur, etc.

Some of these ornaments continued to be in vogue in later times under a changed name and, in some cases, without any change in name, such as Pári-tathya (Sinthi), Patra-páshyá (Pasha), Keyur (Ananta), Kankan (Kankan), etc. Many of the old varieties of ornaments, however, became obsolete in course of time, and there is no way of knowing from the names what the ornaments of such names were made of and looked like. For example, we have no clear idea about such ornaments as Garbhak, Lalámak, Apir, Dwirájik, Karnendu, etc.

Though the use of gold ornaments has been in vogue throughout India, there has always been distinct regional patterns of ornaments. For example, while the Tikli, a head ornament of Bengali women, *falls down* on the forehead from the parting of the hair, the Borla, a head ornament of Rajasthani women, *goes up* instead of falling down on the forehead.<sup>1</sup> Again, while in Cuttack in Orissa, most filigree patterns

1. See, Roy, Sudhansu Kumar. 'The Artisan Castes of West Bengal and their Craft' in 'Census ; West Bengal'. The Tribes and Castes of West Bengal, 1953, p. 332.



are built up around flowers ; in Karimnagar in Andhra Pradesh, creepers and leaves predominate.<sup>2</sup>

The fashion of wearing gold ornaments has a long tradition behind it in Bengal. In old Bengali literature, we find references to the use of gold ornaments. In Kabikankan's 'Chandimangal', the poet, while describing Goddess Chandi, says that her feet were adorned with "jewelled golden nupur".<sup>3</sup> Kalketu purchased for his wife from Golahat, among other things, golden bangles also. Alaol in his 'Padmábat' describes the ornaments on the person of Padmini, such as Kundala, Besar, Kankan, Balay, Anguri and Nupur.<sup>4</sup> Jagajjiban Ghosal in his 'Manasá Mangal' describes Behula as wearing Cháki, Bali, Saraswati Hár, Jhámpani Tár, Besari, Anguri, Nupur, etc.<sup>5</sup> Bhabani Sankar Das in his 'Chandi Kabya' describes Khullana as wearing Karnaphul in her ears, Besar on her nose, pearl necklace around her neck, Swarna Tár, Bájubandha, Swarna Jhámpani and Kankan on her arms, jewelled Anguri on her fingers, golden Kinkini around her waist, and Makar Kháru, Gungur and Nupur to decorate her feet.<sup>6</sup> The stone sculptures of the Sena and Pala periods also furnish evidence of the use of various ornaments in Bengali society of the time. The most elaborate description of the various designs of ornaments in 19th century Bengal, the amount of gold needed to make them, their prices in the prevailing market, etc, is available from very old jewellers' catalogues. I had the privilege of seeing one such catalogue of 80 years ago. This catalogue contains descriptions of certain ornaments which have long since gone out of fashion. The Chátai necklace, for example, weighing from 12 to 25 tolas, which was once worn by well to do Bengali women, has now become completely obsolete. The biscuit hár and cowrie hár which goldsmiths once made for their customers are not known to most of the goldsmiths of today. I could form an idea about the design of these obsolete types only after seeing that old catalogue. Comparing the old catalogues with the recent catalogues, one can discern certain broad changes that have taken place in the fashion in gold ornaments. The two major changes I have noticed are —

2. See Chattopadhyay, Kamaladevi. 'The Glory of Indian Handicrafts', p. 159.

3. Kabikankan Chandi. ed. by Dinesh Chandra Sen, Charuchandra Bandyopadhyaya and Risikesh Basu. Part I, p. 177.

4. Sen, Dinesh Chandra. Vanga Sahitya Parichaya, Part II, pp. 1320-1321.

5. Ibid, Part I, pp. 287-288.

6. Ibi, Part I, p. 372.



1. The old ornaments were much heavier than the modern ones. This change reflects partly a change in taste, and partly, possibly mainly, the much increased price of gold and consequently the cost of heavy gold ornaments.

2. There has been, in many cases, a replacement of flowers, leaves and birds in the designs of ornaments by geometrical patterns. This change is in keeping with the trend of modern fashion in general, whether in the field of architecture or painting or sculpture, of replacing true-to-life decorative style by a somewhat abstract pattern of decoration using lines, circles, squares, etc.

Apart from the very old catalogues of jewellers of Bengal, a very authentic and precise picture of the state of fashion in ornaments in 19th century Bengal was presented by T. N. Mukherjee in his 'Art Manufactures of India'. The book was written for the Glasgow International Exhibition of 1888 and was first published in the same year, under the authority of the Government of India. Mukherjee has given in this book a list of the ornaments which were worn by Bengali women at that time that is, in 1888. For the purpose of comparing the fashion in ornaments then and now, I shall reproduce the list presented by Mukherjee and at the same time point out which ones are rarely used today and which ones are still in use.

## BENGALI ORNAMENTS

### IN 1888

#### 1. Ornaments of the head :

Sinhi	Rarely used except on occasions such as marriage ceremony.
Jinjir	Obsolete.
Kántá	Still in use, but now usually made of silver.
Chiruni <sup>7</sup>	Still used, but not as popular as it once was.

7. It was once customary for Chirunis to bear such inscriptions as "be happy" "remember me", "do not forget", "yours", "blessings", etc. Such inscriptions are no longer preferred, and have been mostly replaced by decorative designs.

## BENGALI ORNAMENTS

### IN 1978



## 2. Ornaments of the nose :

Nath	}	Became obsolete, but, of late, coming back into fashion.
Nákchchábi		
Mákri	}	Obsolete
Besar		
Nolak		

## 3. Ornaments of the ear :

Dul	}	Still in use
Dhenri		
Mákri		
Pipul Pátá		
Máchch	}	Still in use, but no longer known by these names.
Karnaphul		
Kánbálá		
Chámpá		
Kán		
Birbauli		
Chaudáni		

## 4. Necklaces :

Kantha málá	}	Still in use, but no longer known by these names
Mohan málá		
Pánchnali		
Sátnali		
Dána		
Motor málá		Obsolete
Hár	}	Still in use
Chik		
Hánsuli		

## 5. Armlets and Bracelets :

Churi	}	Still in use
Misri		
Báuti		
Bálá		
Kankan		
Ratnachur	}	Rarely used
Ananta		
Tágá		
Mardána	}	Still in use, but no longer known by these names.
Jabdána		



Chál dáná	}	Obsolete
Murki máduli		
Palákánti	}	
Khoyeno		
Labanga phul	}	
Nárikel phul		
Karapadma	}	
Gajna		
Ras-no	}	
Tár		
Báju	}	
Hát-máduli		
Táwiz	}	
Jasham		
Damdám		

6. Waist Ornaments :

Chandra-hár	}	Waist ornaments of women have become obsolete in Bengal. Only children are sometimes adorned with Waist ornaments
Surya-hár		
Got	}	
Chabi-chchikli		
Biche	}	
Byang		
Batphul	}	
Nimphul		
Bor	}	
Komar pátá		

7. Anklets and Ornaments for the feet (all silver ornaments) :

Bámkmal	}	Ornaments for the feet became obsolete, except in the case of children, but revived in the form of <b>Torá</b> in the sixties. The <b>Torá</b> , after becoming popular among young women in the recent past, is again going out of fashion.
Gol-mal		
Foren-mal	}	
Painjor		
Gujri	}	
Pancham		
Charan-padma	}	
Benki		
Gungur		

8. Ornaments for men :

Except for very young boys, ornaments for men had almost ceased to exist.<sup>8</sup> } . . . The same position continues.

8. Mukherjee possibly forgot to mention that men wore gold buttons and finger rings, often with precious stones set on them. Among a small section of wealthy Bengalis, men also used to wear a thin gold *hár* as well. As a matter of fact, in his list of Bengali ornaments, the ornaments for the fingers do not occur. Menfolk in Bengal today also wear gold buttons and finger rings, and a small section wear a gold *hár* too.



From a comparison of the ornaments in vogue in 1888 and 1978, that is, the ornaments used about a century ago and those which are now used, some interesting conclusions emerge. Firstly, certain items have continued to be in fashion notwithstanding the fact that fashion, unlike custom, is not quite durable. Among ornaments of this category we can mention ornaments like *Hár*, *Chik*, *Churi*, etc. Secondly, certain items like *Sinhi*, *Ananta*, *Taga*, etc. have become rare but not fully obsolete. These ornaments are still used; but used only by a small section of Bengali women or used only on rare occasions. Thirdly, certain items are characterised by alternate phases of appearance and disappearance. For example, *Nákchchábis* were not worn in the ancient period; at a later period *Nákchchábi* came into fashion; in the closing years of the 19th century *Nákchchábis* were going out of fashion in Bengal; in the 60's and 70's of the 20th century some Bengali women were again wearing *Nákchchábis*. Similarly, *Báutis* were once in fashion in Bengal; in the closing years of the 19th century they were going out of fashion; now *Báutis* are again in fashion.

Gold ornaments are now-a-days very costly, so costly that only the richer sections of our society can afford to buy them for luxury. The middle class people buy them only when they must, for example, for giving ornaments to the bride to satisfy the expectations of the bridegroom's side. The amount of money that has to be spent for purchasing ornaments for the marriage of one's daughter or sister naturally depends on how exacting the groom's guardian is. There was a time, however, when some middle class families also could afford to purchase gold ornaments for luxury. Once women of the richer section of society had more than one set of ornaments, and many middle class women also could boast of an assortment of gold ornaments. Even the poorer classes in Indian society possessed a few gold ornaments. Marx wrote in 1853 that Indian society's 'love of finery is so great that even the lower class, those who go about nearly naked, have commonly a pair of golden ear-rings and a gold ornament of some kind hung round their necks'.<sup>9</sup> With the pauperisation of the Indian masses as a result of the foreign rule over India for 200 years and ruthless exploitation by the Indian bourgeoisie since independence, gold ornaments have made their exit from the homes of the poorer classes and have become a painfully purchased social necessity in middle class families. Costly gold ornaments are now beyond the reach of all except the rich and rolled gold, imitation

9. Marx, Karl. 'The British Rule in India' in "The First Indian War of Independence", p. 17.



jewellery, etc. are now used by women quite extensively. Gold ornaments were in the past, and are to some extent even now, partly an object of fashion and partly an insurance against the contingencies of an uncertain future. Gold ornaments could be mortgaged or sold away for meeting a pressing financial need which could not be met from the available cash resources of the family. At present, however, there are much better ways of saving for an unpredictable future, and gold ornaments have lost much of their importance as a store of value for future financial requirements. Those who possess plenty of gold ornaments now have also adequate liquid assets to fall back upon in times of need and those who do not have enough liquid assets fall back upon, do not have much in the form of gold ornaments either. In any case, gold ornaments today serve more the craving for fashion or the requirements of marriage ceremony than the need for storing up value for unforeseen contingencies.

A study of the designs of the gold ornaments shows how deeply the artisans who made them were influenced by the natural objects surrounding them. The designs were patterned after either inanimate natural objects or the flora and the fauna of the country. Thus we find such motifs as sun, moon, stars, paddy, pea, pipal leaves, tamarind leaves, date palm leaves, bamboo stem, rose, lotus, champa, conchshell, butterfly, scorpion, frog, fish, snake, peacock, dog, sheep, tiger, elephant, etc. These motifs were possibly in use for decorative purposes even before the gold ornaments came into vogue. Some of these motifs and designs are found in *alpaná* decorations also, and that indicates the folk origin of the designs of the ornaments. Sudhansu Kumar Roy suggests that gold and silver ornaments of Bengal were copied from bead ornaments of a pre-historic period and from the designs of ancient lac, iron and conchshell bangles.<sup>10</sup> The shapes and motifs of Bengali ornaments indeed speak of a long history behind them stretching back to pre-historic times. This ancient heritage was successively modified in course of time, partly owing to the changed materials and methods which came to supplant the older ones, and partly, as a result of successive waves of exotic influence, the influence of Hindus from northern and southern India, the influence of the Mughals, the influence of the Europeans. The fashionable gold ornaments in Bengal today are a blending of tradition and modernity. The sophisticated form and finish of these ornaments give them a modern look ; their motifs and basic designs are sanctified by a hoary tradition.

10 See Roy, Sudansu Kumar. op. cit., p. 332.



How fashionable is it today for a Bengali woman to wear a full set of gold ornaments? In educated society, it would be considered unfashionable to do so, except on ceremonial occasions such as a marriage party. It would be a very unusual sight if a college-going or office-going Bengali woman, or a Bengali woman going out to see a film or to do some shopping, is seen wearing a sinthi on her head, a chiruni in her coiffeur, or ratanchur on her hands. A modern fashionable Bengali woman would at best wear a thin necklace, two jewelled or plain small earrings, a jewelled or plain finger ring, and one or two pairs of churis. Too many ornaments may indicate a woman's affluence, but such a display of her affluence would also indicate that her taste is not modern. Modern taste in the matter of ornaments, incidentally, matches the slender purse of most middle class families in Bengal today, only a few among them being in a position to spend enough money to buy plenty of ornaments for their women members. Increasing cases of snatching, theft, robbery, etc, have also helped to inhibit the use of too many gold ornaments. Many middle class Bengali women now wear for everyday use only or mostly ornaments made of rolled gold, glass, lac, etc. Some have started wearing silver ornaments instead of gold ornaments. But even today when there is a gathering of middle class women on a ceremonial occasion, it is considered to be derogatory to a woman's prestige to be scantily ornamented. It is taken to be a reflection on the economic status of her father, or, if she is married, of her husband. In general, aristocratic womenfolk of northern India, particularly the Rajasthanis, wear more gold ornaments than their Bengali counterparts.

If the price of gold remains as high as now, or rises higher, it is very likely that the use of gold ornaments by Bengali women will decline still further. The spread of education among women will also have the same effect because the craving for gold ornaments varies inversely with the level of education of a woman. This is not to say that educated women are less interested in fashion. They are as interested in fashion as their uneducated sisters are. But in their case the urge for fashion expresses itself mainly through other media rather than gold ornaments, for example, through the design of the coiffeur, the way the sari is worn, the type of the sari, and so on. As for gold ornaments, modern educated Bengali women prefer items which are light in weight, modern in look, and reasonable in price. But only a small section of Bengali women are educated as yet, and the craving for heavy ornaments of the traditional or semi-traditional type is still very strong among a large section of uneducated Bengali women, though the satisfaction of that craving





depends on the length of the purse of the earning members of their families. Whether educated or uneducated, at least a few gold ornaments are, however, an object of universal feminine desire, and the lack of fulfilment of this minimal desire would sadden the heart of every Bengali woman, to whatever stratum of society she might belong.



## CHAPTER—V

### THE GOLDSMITHS OF THE NORTHERN FRINGE OF CALCUTTA—A FIELD STUDY

The goldsmiths constitute a sizable occupational group in the northern fringe of the city of Calcutta, extending from Alambazar to Dum Dum. The area that I have selected for this fieldwork includes the whole of Baranagar and Sinthee and a part of Dum Dum and Cossipore. There is a Sinthee-Dum Dum-Baranagar-Cossipore Swarna-Silpi Samiti, which is a branch of the Bangiya Swarna-Silpi Samiti, and the area selected by me is the same as that covered by this branch of the local goldsmiths' association. I had to depend on the help and co-operation of this Samiti for data collection and observation of the goldsmiths' social and professional lives, and so I thought that it would be convenient for me to confine my work within this area. This area covers about 10 square miles and has about 300 goldsmithy work shops within it. The number of goldsmiths who work in these workshops is about 1200. If the 'boys', the young lads who work as helping hands, are also included, the number of persons employed in these workshops would be about 1500. I have excluded them from the universe because they are at best apprentices and not fullfledged goldsmiths. Goldsmithy is, in this area, an exclusively male occupation, but in some cases womenfolk of a goldsmith's family render some assistance to the goldsmith by lending their hands to some simple operations in the process of ornament-making.

Among the goldsmiths of this area about one-third are owners of the workshops and their close relatives, and about two-thirds are salaried goldsmiths or *kárigars*. On the basis of the type of work done, the goldsmiths of the area can be divided into five main categories—

1. those who make the ornaments ( *garhit kárigars* ),
2. those who make golden balls, of different sizes, which are used in ornaments ( *gulidána kárigars* ),
3. those who chisel the ornaments ( *chchlilál kárigars* ),
4. those who do polishing work ( *pálsh kárigars* ), and
5. those who do enamelling work ( *miná kárigars* ).

Of these five categories, those doing *garhit* work are by far the largest numerical group. There are only a few *chchlaiwálas* and *pálsh-wálas* in this area. The number of those who make *gulldánás* and do *miná* work is even smaller. There are no dice makers in this area. The designs which the goldsmiths of this area follow in making ornaments,



are taken from the catalogues of the well-known jewellery shops in Calcutta and not created by any local goldsmith. However, some local goldsmiths sometimes take the liberty of modifying these given designs, and if the modified design catches the fancy of buyers, it gains currency.

The goldsmiths of Baranagar, Sinthee, Dum Dum and Cossipore have the reputation of being expert goldsmiths, particularly in the matter of making gold chains which are used in several ornaments, such as sinthi, necklace, etc. The craft of goldsmithy in this area has a very long history behind it. The very name 'Sinthee', according to some very old goldsmiths of the locality, is derived from the ornament bearing that name, the making of that ornament having been a speciality of the local goldsmiths of Sinthee in the past. I have no conclusive evidence to prove or disprove this theory, but I think that it has an element of plausibility. That the goldsmiths of Sinthee were, and still are, adepts in making gold chains of various sorts (and the ornament 'Sinthi' is indeed an ornamental chain decorating the parting of the hair on a woman's head) is not disputed by anyone acquainted with this craft in Calcutta.

The present goldsmith population of the area is quite heterogeneous in many respects. Few of them are descendents of the goldsmiths who introduced this craft here at the beginning of the twentieth century. Most of the present goldsmiths are from different West Bengal districts. Only about one-tenth of the goldsmith population of the area are from East Bengal. The percentage of those who are from East Bengal is higher in Dum Dum than in Sinthee, Baranagar and Cossipore. There are only a few Muslims among the goldsmiths. Those of the Mahishya caste are the largest in number. The number of educated goldsmiths is very small in this area. The majority of the goldsmiths are, however, literate. There are some illiterate goldsmiths as well. A few of the goldsmiths are quite well-to-do. The majority are not financially well off.

When I decided to study the social, economic and cultural aspects of the lives of these goldsmiths, I did not have any clear idea about the size and composition of this heterogeneous goldsmith community. Without some preliminary knowledge about the universe, I could not draw up my plan of work and take a decision about the size and type of sample I should select. I was helped out of this difficulty by the office bearers of the Sinthee-DumDum-Baranagar-Cossipore Swarna-Silpi Samiti, who were kind enough to give me an idea about the number of workshops in the area, the number of goldsmiths working in them, the



number of Hindus and Muslims among them, etc. Equipped with this preliminary knowledge, I decided to take a fairly representative sample of 10% of the universe. Effort was made to include in the sample goldsmiths belonging to different religions, castes, districts etc. more or less in proportion to their numerical strength in the total goldsmith population in the area. I also framed a questionnaire consisting of a bunch of factual and attitudinal questions, and interviewed all the 120 goldsmiths included in the sample. It took me about 6 months, November, 1978 to April, 1979, to take the interviews, and in this part of my work also I received the generous assistance of the office bearers of the Swarna-Silpi Samiti and a few other local goldsmiths. One or another among them accompanied me to the workshops where the interviews were taken, introduced me to the goldsmiths and requested them to help me in writing a book on them by answering my questions and supplying me with the information I wanted. Thanks to this generous assistance from the leaders of the local goldsmiths' association, I could establish a rapport with the goldsmiths which was so essential for eliciting the required information from them. They came to accept me as an outsider sympathetic to them and interested in understanding their problems. They demonstrated for my benefit the techniques used by them in ornament-making. They opened their minds to me and told me about their personal backgrounds and professional experiences, and thus furnished me with enough material for writing a number of case histories. I had the privilege of attending as a guest an annual jatra festival of the local goldsmiths and a meeting of the local Swarna Silpi Samiti. In short, apart from taking interviews, I had the opportunity to observe the goldsmiths from a close angle, and to know a good deal of their frustrations and ambitions, fears and hopes, sorrows and joys.

Goldsmithy workshops are spread throughout the Sinthee-Dum Dum-Baranagar-Cossipore area. There is, however, a concentration of workshops in a few places within this area, such as the vicinity of the Dum Dum Station, a part of Atapara, the neighbourhood of the Sinthee market, a portion of Beni Colony and Panchanantala, the neighbourhood of the Baranagar market, and Baranagar Tantipara. There are some goldsmithy workshops also in Gopal Bose Lane, D. Gupta Lane, South Sinthee Road, Tobin Road, R. N. Guha Road, etc. The workshops of this craft are not of a uniform size. They vary both with regard to the working space and the number of persons working. As regards space, the largest workshop I have visited has a space of about 160 square feet, and the smallest has a space of about 60 square feet only. Some of



the workshops are well-ventilated and have large windows to let sunlight in during daytime. Most of the workshops are, however, not properly ventilated and are so dark even in daytime that work can be done only with the help of electric light. Many of the workshops are housed in pucca buildings with concrete roof. Some of the workshops have asbestos or tiled roof. In most cases, a single room or shed serves as a workshop. I have also seen workshops consisting of more than one room. In a few cases, two or three workshops are housed in the same room or shed. As regards the number of persons working,<sup>1</sup> the smallest is the one-man unit, and the largest employs 10 people (including the owner of the workshop who also works and excluding the 'boys' who are not licensed goldsmiths). Three-fifth of the workshops visited by me employ 3 persons or less, and two-fifth employ 4 persons or more. The total number of goldsmiths who work in these 65 workshops is 238. Thus, the average number of goldsmiths per workshop is 3.66. The following table will give an idea of the proportion of workshops of different sizes among the goldsmithy workshops in the area.

TABLE 1

## WORKSHOP SIZE

N 65

Number of persons										
working in the workshop—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of workshops—	9	13	17	8	7	3	2	2	3	1

The relation between the owners and the *kārigars* in this industry is remarkably good. This is due to several factors, one of which is the fact that most of the present owners were once themselves *kārigars*,

1. Under the Gold (Control) Act, 1968, a certified goldsmith cannot employ other goldsmiths in his workshop as his employees. He can engage not more than one hired labourer to assist him in his work, but such hired labourer shall not make or repair any ornament. Legally, thus, all goldsmithy workshops are one-man units. Actually, more than one goldsmith may and do work in a workshop, and the legal requirement is fulfilled by maintaining a separate account in the name of each *kārigar* to show that they are all self-employed goldsmiths and not employees of the workshop.



and since almost all of them also work as goldsmiths, the difference in status between the owners and the employees do not result, in this industry, in the formation of two distinct classes. Another factor promoting a good relation between the owners and the employees in this craft is this that as it is an occupation with a fluctuating fortune and unsteady prospects, those engaged in it as employees do not think that it would do any good to them to exert pressure on the owners for higher rates of remuneration. Not that frictions do not occur in the relation between the owners and the employees or that the employees do not have any grievances, but such frictions and grievances do not result in any dislocation of work in the goldsmithy workshops. The incipient conflict-situation is eased through a compromise or through mediation by respected elders in the profession before it takes a serious turn. Both the owners and the employees are members of the same association, the Sinthee-Dum Dum-Baranagar-Cossipore Swarna-Silpi Samiti, and this factor also contributes towards the maintenance of peace in this small-scale industry.

The goldsmith community of this area is a bi-religious and multi-caste community. The religious and caste composition of our sample (which broadly reflects the religious and caste composition of the total goldsmith population of the area) is shown below.

**TABLE-2**  
**RELIGIOUS AND CASTE COMPOSITION** **N 120**

Name of religion and caste		Number of goldsmiths	Percentage of total
A. Hindu		117	97.5
1.	Mahishya	74	61.66
2.	Kayastha	7	5.83
3.	Tantubaya	5	4.16
4.	Sadgop	5	4.16
5.	Tili	4	3.33
6.	Satchasi	4	3.33
7.	Karmakar	4	3.33
8.	Vaishnab	4	3.33
9.	Halwai	3	2.5
10.	Gandhabanik	2	1.66
11.	Sunri	2	1.66
12.	Malakar	1	0.83
13.	Brahmin	1	0.83
14.	Swarnakar	1	0.83
B. Muslim		3	2.5



The Muslims constitute a very small proportion, less than 3% of the total goldsmith population of the area. Most of the Muslim goldsmiths here are engaged in polishing work. Among the Hindus, the Mahishyas are numerically preponderant, constituting about 60% of the total goldsmith population of the area, including the Muslim goldsmiths. The traditional occupation of the Mahishyas was cultivation, and some of the Mahishya goldsmiths of this area have retained some link with their native villages and their own cultivated lands. Their near relatives, staying in their ancestral villages, are still engaged in cultivation. There are others, however, who have completely severed their links with their villages, have permanently settled in Calcutta, and have become exclusively dependent on goldsmithy and other urban occupations. Less than one per cent of the goldsmiths of this area are goldsmiths by caste. The goldsmith community of the area, thus, exemplifies an extreme case of an almost complete separation between caste and occupation. It is interesting to note, however, that though about 99 per cent of the goldsmiths of this area are not goldsmiths by caste, the fact that the majority of the adult male members of these goldsmiths' families take to goldsmithy, creates the impression that the goldsmiths or *sakrās* of the area constitute an occupation-based caste-group. Among the earning members of the goldsmiths' families studied by me, 69.02% work as goldsmiths and only 30.98% are engaged in some other craft, business or service. And what is more, the goldsmiths of the area show a strong 'we-feeling', and in their strong sense of group-solidarity, they almost resemble a caste.

From the angle of their place of origin, the goldsmiths of the Sinthee-Dum Dum-Baranagar-Cossipore area are an assorted group. Many of the present day goldsmiths are newcomers both to the place and to the profession. Their families entered this profession a generation back, and the number of families in which goldsmithy has continued to be the family occupation for more than two generations is quite small. Only 44.16% of our sample of goldsmiths have joined the profession because it was the occupation of one or more of their family elders, and 55.84% have joined this profession just because they happened to find employment in this craft. About one-fourth of the present day goldsmiths of this area have been staying in Calcutta for several generations and regard Calcutta as their home city, while the rest are immigrants. Some have settled in Calcutta during the last 20 years or so, but still regard this or that district as their home district. There are others who are staying in Calcutta only in connection with their work, but have left their



families or a part of their families in the districts from which they hail. The following table shows the place of origin of the goldsmiths of our sample :—

TABLE—3  
PLACE OF ORIGIN OF THE GOLDSMITHS N 120

	Place of origin	Number of goldsmiths	Percentage of total
A.	West Bengal	104	86.67
1.	Calcutta	30	25.00
2.	Midnapur	28	23.33
3.	Howrah	25	20.83
4.	24-Parganas	9	7.5
5.	Hooghly	7	5.83
6.	Burdwan	5	4.16
B.	East Bengal (Bangladesh)	16	13.33

The overwhelming majority of the goldsmiths in our sample are from West Bengal and only a small proportion is from East Bengal. The preponderance of West Bengal people among goldsmiths is a characteristic of the goldsmith community in the Sinthee-Dum Dum-Baranagar-Cossipore area, but not necessarily in other areas of Calcutta with a substantial goldsmith population. For example, in the Beadon Street area, the majority of goldsmiths are East Bengal people.

The goldsmiths of the area belong to different age-groups. The 'boys' or *chchokrás* are in their teens and constitute the youngest section among the persons engaged in goldsmithy workshops. The work of these boys consists in assisting the goldsmiths by doing all sorts of sundry jobs from keeping the workshop clean and tidy to bringing tea from the nearest tea stalls. Actually, these boys are goldsmiths in the making, apprentices in the profession. Their guardians have sent them to work in the workshops with the hope that their sons will learn the technique of the craft in course of time and one day become fullfledged goldsmiths. The licensed goldsmiths here are all above 20 years of age. The youngest boy I found working in a workshop in this area is only 12 years old. The oldest working goldsmith in our sample is aged 68 years. There



are, of course, older people who are still associated with this craft, but due to old age, they are no longer actively engaged in the actual work of ornament-making. Old people above 60 are a very small portion of the goldsmith population here. One reason behind this is, I guess, that the goldsmith's work involves a constant straining of the eyes, and as a result, the eyesight becomes affected sooner than in many other occupations and usually incapacitates a goldsmith from continuing to work as an ornament-maker before he has reached sixty. Table 4 furnishes the data pertaining to the age-wise composition of our sample of goldsmiths.

TABLE—4  
AGE-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE GOLDSMITHS  
IN THE SAMPLE N 120

Age-group	Number of goldsmiths	Percentage of total
21 to 30 years	39	32.5
31 to 40 „	35	29.16
41 to 50 „	31	25.83
51 to 60 „	10	8.33
61 years and above	5	4.16

The goldsmith community of the Sinthee-Dum Dum-Baranagar-Cossipore area does not constitute a homogeneous mass from the angle of economic status. There is a wide disparity in the incomes of different goldsmiths. Some owners of workshops earn a lot, while there are other owners who do not earn much. There are some *kárigars* who are quite well paid and there are also *kárigars* who get a meagre remuneration. It is very difficult to know how much exactly individual goldsmiths earn per month, partly because their income varies from month to month and so they cannot always correctly figure out the monthly average, and partly because they are usually quite reticent to disclose their actual income. The latter is particularly the case with the affluent goldsmiths who deliberately make an under-statement of their income because they are afraid that if they reveal the truth to anybody, they might be caught in the tax-net. There are a few goldsmiths who own two or three storeyed buildings, cars, T. V. sets, etc., and these clearly indicate



their affluent condition, but none of the goldsmiths in our sample reported a monthly income of more than Rs. 900. My observation of the standard of living of the goldsmiths of the area suggests, however, that the overwhelming majority of them are not financially well off. This fact is also borne out by the data collected by me on different income levels among the goldsmiths of our sample, the value of the data being admittedly limited by the factors noted above.

TABLE-5

## INCOME-LEVELS AMONG THE GOLDSMITHS

N 120

Monthly income	Number of goldsmiths	Percentage of total
Below Rs. 300	55	45.83
Above Rs. 300 but below Rs. 600	59	49.17
Above Rs. 600 but below Rs. 900	6	5
Above Rs. 900	0	0

Besides the income level, another indicator of one's economic status would be whether he owns a house in Calcutta or is a tenant. About 52% of our sample do not own houses in Calcutta and about 48% live in own houses. Though ownership of a residential building is, *ceteris paribus*, an indicator of economic wellbeing, too much reliance should not be put on this criterion, because there are houses and houses, and a tenant may sometimes be financially better off than the owner of a house.

Apart from the income level and the ownership/nonownership of a house, another test of the economic well-being of an artisan group, possibly a more reliable test, would be whether the artisans want their next generation to stay on in their profession. If goldsmithy were really a lucrative occupation, the majority of the present goldsmiths would like their sons to become goldsmiths like them. But, revealingly enough, only 25% of our sample want their sons to become goldsmiths. This may, of course, have something to do with a longing for white collar jobs, but, basically, this aversion to train the next generation as golds-



miths stems from the frustrating economic experience of the present generation of goldsmiths.

About 72% of the goldsmiths of our sample are married. The families of the goldsmiths are in many cases joint, but nuclear families are also quite frequent. The number of families to which 120 goldsmiths of our sample belong is 104 and the total number of persons in these families is 721. [The number of families is 104 because each of the 120 goldsmiths of our sample does not belong to a different family. In some cases, the father and his son, both goldsmiths, have been included. Similarly, in a few cases, two brothers, both belonging to the same family, have been included in the sample]. That is, on an average there are 6.93 or about 7 members per family. Table 6 presents data pertaining to family size in the goldsmith community.

TABLE—6

## FAMILY SIZE IN THE GOLDSMITH COMMUNITY

Family size	Number of families	Total number of persons in families of this size
Two members	2	4
Three members	6	18
Four members	13	52
Five members	23	115
Six members	15	90
Seven members	14	98
Eight members	7	56
Nine members	6	54
Ten members	5	50
Eleven members	3	33
Twelve members	3	36
Fourteen members	1	14
Fifteen members	1	15
Sixteen members	2	32
Seventeen members	1	17
Eighteen members	1	18
Nineteen members	1	19
Total :	104	721



70·19% of the goldsmiths' families have 7 members or less. Only 5·76% of the families have 15 members or more. Among the 721 persons who constitute the total membership of these 104 families, 342 are males and 379 are females. Agewise 236 are children upto the age of 15 and 485 are above the age of 15. Among the members of these families, 226 are earning members, and among the earning members 156 are engaged in goldsmithy. 525 of the members of the goldsmiths' families can read and write Bengali, only 37 are matriculates, and only 7 are graduates.

The educational level of the goldsmiths of the area is very low. In many cases, a goldsmith joins this profession at a very young age as a 'boy' or apprentice, and thus his schooling is terminated after he has read upto Class III or IV or V. It is no wonder, therefore, that there would be very few among the goldsmiths who are matriculates or graduates. Among the goldsmiths of our sample only 1 is a graduate, and only 3 are matriculates or School Final passed. Most of the goldsmiths, however, can read and write Bengali, and hence cannot be regarded as illiterates, though there are a few among them who are really illiterates. About 79% of our sample almost regularly read a Bengali newspaper. There are a few among the goldsmiths, in addition to the graduates and the matriculates, who have a working knowledge of English. The goldsmiths of this area regard their lack of education as a handicap, and are sending their sons and daughters to schools and colleges with an eye to make the next generation more educated than the present one. One of the preconditions for raising the craft to a higher level of efficiency, and hence profitability, is, of course, to make the goldsmiths educated. But the educated sons of the goldsmiths usually prefer to leave the craft and join some service. The spread of education, thus, is likely to have two contradictory effects on goldsmithy. On the one hand, it is likely to vitalise the craft because educated goldsmiths will be able to handle its technical and business aspects more efficiently; on the other hand, it is likely to weaken the craft by weaning away the educated next generation of the goldsmiths' families from the family occupation and thus depriving it of the expertise which could accumulate only through successive generations pursuing this occupation.

The goldsmiths' work is a very arduous one. The work starts at about 9 A. M. and continues intermittently till about 9 P. M. In many



cases, the goldsmith cannot enjoy even one day's rest per week<sup>2</sup>, not to talk of any other holidays. Even during the Durga Puja, the goldsmith's shop hardly remains closed for more than three days. This is not congenial to efficiency ; only a mind and body refreshed by rest can put in efficient work. In the goldsmith's occupation, however, the present system of work leaves no scope for regular rest days. The large jewellery shops of Central Calcutta place orders with the ornament-makers here and a day is usually fixed before which the ornaments will have to be delivered to the jeweller. The ornament-maker, in his turn, gives the ornaments made by him to the polisher for polishing work and insists on the polished ornaments being returned to him by a given date. The ornament-maker will have to get the work completed in time even if that means working without a weekly rest-day, because otherwise he will not get the order from the jeweller. Similarly, the polisher, the chiseller, etc, must complete their work in time by working as many hours as necessary, if they are not to lose the patronage of the ornament-maker.

Though the goldsmiths often do not actually get a weekly rest day, that does not mean that they are busy throughout the year. For days, and even weeks, together they have sometimes to remain idle for want of any work. The leisure which the goldsmiths get every day after the day's work is over, or during the period of their prolonged involuntary idleness, is consumed mostly in attending to domestic business. If the domestic pre-occupations permit, the goldsmiths usually while away the time in gossiping and in playing cards. Many of them are fond of films, and see films occasionally when they have the money and the time to spare for it. Some of the goldsmiths like *jatra* performances, and throng to see *jatras* whenever *jatras* are performed by professionals in any place within the area. A few of the goldsmiths are adepts in *jatra* acting and take part in amateur *jatra* performances. Theatres seem to be less popular among the goldsmiths than films and *jatras*. The following table will give an idea of the preferences of the goldsmiths for cinema, *jatra*, and theatre as alternative forms of entertainment.

- 
2. In the Sinthee-Dum Dum-Baranagar-Cossipore area, the Swarna-Silpi Samiti of the locality has introduced a weekly holiday. Some shops in this area remain closed on sunday, and others on some other day in the week.



TABLE—7

**THE GOLDSMITHS' PREFERENCES FOR CINEMA,  
JATRA AND THEATRE**

N 120

Form of entertainment	Number of goldsmiths who prefer it most	Percentage of total
Cinema	56	46.66
Jatra	31	25.83
Theatre	22	18.33
No opinion	11	9.16

The goldsmiths of the Sinthee-Dum Dum-Baranagar-Cossipore area like music, both vocal and instrumental, and a few of them can themselves sing and play on musical instruments. The nature of their work, however, leaves little time for regular musical practice. The musical tastes of the goldsmiths are not uniform. Their musical preferences are as follows.

TABLE—8

**THE GOLDSMITHS' MUSICAL PREFERENCES**

N 120

Type of music	Number of those who prefer it most	Percentage of total
Devotional Songs	47	39.16
Modern Bengali Songs	33	27.5
Rabindra Sangeet	19	15.83
Hindi Film Songs	14	11.66
Folk Songs	3	2.5
Indian Classical Music	1	0.83
No Opinion	3	2.5



A group of people's preference for a particular type of music is not merely a preference for the musical quality of that variety. It also speaks of a preference for the theme of that type of music. If this be so, then the goldsmiths' marked preference for devotional songs may be said to reflect the religious-mindedness of a large section of the goldsmiths. Classical music does not appeal to goldsmiths because they lack the musical training which alone enables a person to appreciate its beauty and grandeur, and their mode of existence precludes any scope for receiving such training. Unlike classical music, modern Bengali songs and Tagore songs are clearly theme-based and the themes, joy of life, pangs of separation from the beloved one, etc, have a natural appeal to their work-worn heart, apart from their captivating lilting tunes. Hindi film songs are popular particularly among a section of the younger goldsmiths. It is difficult to say why folksongs are not quite popular among the goldsmiths here, particularly when a large percentage of them have a rural background. May be the folk songs are not liked because of the rural theme-content of these songs, the aspiration to become thoroughly urbanised generating an aversion in the minds of these goldsmiths to cultural elements which are palpably hangovers from a rural culture.

The goldsmiths of this area display in their attitudes a medley of incongruent beliefs. On the one hand 73.3% of our sample believe that the basic problems of our people can be solved only through a united struggle of the toiling people, and only 10.83% hold that the real solution of these problems is possible through religion. 68.33% of the goldsmiths of our sample have no objection to marriage with a lower caste. And these, unquestionably, indicate quite a high degree of radical and secular thinking on their part. On the other hand, however, not only that 96.66% of these very goldsmiths believe in the existence of God, 62.5% believe in the existence of spirits as well. 45% of them feel that man's sufferings are due to his sins in a previous birth, 85.83% believe that there are auspicious and inauspicious days and times, 86.66% think that precious stones in finger rings have the magical power of bringing good luck to the user, and 75% are of opinion that one's future can be predicted by studying the lines on the palm of one's hands. This incongruity of beliefs is, of course, not peculiar to goldsmiths alone. In our society, the same incongruity can be noticed in the people belonging to other professions also. There are doctors who diagnose diseases and prescribe medicines in accordance with the principles of medical science but believe that the patients' recovery depends on God's mercy ; there are scientists who make experiments in the laboratory strictly in accordance with



scientific principles, but outside the laboratory discard the same scientific principles and follow unscientific religious injunctions. Such incongruities represent a lag between one part of a man's consciousness and another. The attitudinal data collected by me from the goldsmiths of this area indicate that in their case such an incongruity is very pronounced. The reason behind this incongruity in the attitudes of the goldsmiths is possibly this that their economic experience, the hard days after the introduction of the Gold Control Rules and their united struggle to survive that ordeal, has made a dent in their belief-system and has made their attitudes remarkably secular and radical. The economic experience, the *praxis*, has taught them that without a *Samiti*, without a united movement of the goldsmiths for the realisation of certain common objectives, they would be helpless before the uncertainties of the market and the unsympatheticness of the governmental machinery. The hard realities of life have taught them that caste is an artificial barrier and that occupational ties are more important for their existence than the caste ties which have lost much of their relevance in the present context of the goldsmiths' lives. But religious tradition dies hard, and it continues to have a grip on the minds of these artisans, along with the necessary adjuncts like superstitions and irrational beliefs. In one case, at least, the very mode of existence of the goldsmiths encourages irrational beliefs. The setting of precious stones in finger rings becomes a profitable business mainly because there are people who believe that such stones can bring good luck to the user, and the goldsmith's interest here synchronises with this superstitious belief. In other cases, the superstitions are rooted in tradition coupled with ignorance. Evidently, the economic experience of the goldsmiths has not gone far enough to bring about a thorough modernisation and secularisation of their entire outlook.

The goldsmiths of the Sinthee-Dum Dum-Baranagar-Cossipore area differ among themselves about the quality that is most desirable in human personality. The views expressed by the goldsmiths in our sample when they were asked to choose among certain qualities of human personality, are presented below in a tabular form.



TABLE—9

## THE MOST DESIRABLE QUALITY IN MAN N 120

Name of the quality	Number of goldsmiths who consider it as most important	Percentage of total
Honesty	47	39.16
Intelligence	34	28.33
Kindness	30	25.00
Courage	8	6.66
Scholarship	1	0.83

It is said that the values of a community reflect their mode of existence. From the above table, it becomes clear that the human quality the goldsmiths value most is honesty. Honesty has, of course, many dimensions, and one who is honest in one sphere, may not be so in another. At least in one respect the goldsmiths maintain quite a high level of honesty—in respect of their mutual dealings. The ornament-maker gives articles worth hundreds of rupees to the polisher for polishing and no receipt is demanded or given against these articles. The ornament-maker could hardly do anything if the polisher denies ever having received the articles from him. But such things never happen in this industry, and as a goldsmith friend of mine told me in answer to my query about such a possibility—"Well, I can sleep soundly at night without any worry about the imaginary danger of the costly ornaments given to the polisher or the chiseller being usurped by them." Similarly, the 'boys' are sometimes sent to the polisher by the ornament-maker with unpolished ornaments. These ornaments are often more valuable than the sum total of say two years salary of the 'boy' who carries them to the polisher. And it seems that it would not be unnatural for the 'boy' to yield to the temptation of fleeing from the locality instead of delivering them to the polisher. But such incidents are extremely rare. As a matter of fact, only three such acts of dishonesty on the part of the 'boys' have been reported to me by my informants, and these three incidents occurred in course of last ten years. The goldsmithy industry is based on mutual trust among its various sections, and if anybody indulges in gross dishonesty in his dealings with another member of the community, he will become a suspect in the eyes of the community and his professional prospects will be doomed. To say that the goldsmiths do not resort to gross dishonesty



in their mutual dealings is, however, not to say that no goldsmith ever accuses another of not being fully honest in his dealings with him, and, in fact, goldsmiths sometimes quarrel among themselves, often very loudly and abusively, over such matters as undue delay in finishing a work, undue loss of gold in course of polishing or chiseling, etc. As regards their dealings with customers, a goldsmith with reputation has to be honest enough to desist the temptation of making profits through fraudulent practices, because he is sure to lose the goodwill of the customers in the process. There are, of course, unscrupulous people in every walk of life, and the goldsmith community also is not without black sheep. The ill-reputation of the goldsmiths in their dealings with the customers is due to these black sheep. It is significant that among human qualities honesty is given the highest place by the largest number in our sample, and this could not be so if dishonesty had been the watchword of success in this field of activity. The next largest number of goldsmiths regard intelligence as the greatest human quality, and kindness is a close third. The goldsmiths of this area cannot boast of education, and most of them are not even matriculates. If they have been able to establish themselves in this industry, it has been, to a large extent, due to their intelligence. Goldsmithy is a profession in which intelligence is a quality required at every step, from learning techniques of production to handling the day to day transactions. It is no wonder, therefore, that goldsmiths would understand the value of intelligence for success in life. Kindness, obviously, is not an essential quality in a goldsmith from the technical or business point of view. If some goldsmiths value it so much it is because of considerations which are humane, possibly religious, rather than professional. It is interesting to note that only a small proportion of goldsmiths value courage as a human quality, and, may be, this is due to the fact that the mode of existence of a goldsmith is such that it demands not courage but other qualities such as honesty and intelligence, except the minimum of quantum of courage which is required in every man in whatever station he is placed. That not even one percent of the goldsmiths regards scholarship as the supreme human quality, possibly indicates the plain fact that scholarship, of all the human qualities, has the least bearing on the goldsmiths' mode of existence and hence is least appreciated as a desirable human quality.

The goldsmiths of the Sinthee-Dum Dum-Baranagar-Cossipore area are an occupational group within the larger society of the locality. Their relations with the non-goldsmith gentry of the locality are good. But



there is an undercurrent of prejudice and distrust. To some of the educated non-goldsmiths of the locality, the teachers, the clerks, the doctors, etc, the *sakrás* are a group of illiterate artisans engaged in smuggling gold and profiting by adroitly stealing a part of the gold which is supposed to go into the making of ornaments. "A goldsmith steals gold even from the ear-rings of his mother", non-goldsmith gentlemen disparagingly remark about the goldsmiths. The goldsmiths sharply react to such stereotypes by retorting, "The so called educated *bhadralok* steals money from the purse of his father". These stereotypes and counter-stereotypes are expressions of a prejudiced attitude, and such prejudice raises an invisible wall separating the goldsmiths from the non-goldsmith gentlemen of the locality. As a result, though a goldsmith may have nodding acquaintance with his non-goldsmith neighbours, and with some of them he may have cordial relations as well, his most intimate social relations are with members of his own community. Fellow goldsmiths are the people with whom he has the bitterest quarrel and the warmest friendship. A goldsmith's hours of work are spent in association with people who make, polish and chisel ornaments; his hours of leisure are spent in company with fellow goldsmiths whether he spends the leisure in playing cards, or in gossiping, or in seeing films or *jatras*. Only other goldsmiths share his worries about uncertain economic prospects, fears about being harassed by officials, dreams about a future when their labour will be amply rewarded and their artistic skill will win social recognition and governmental patronage.

The goldsmith community is a neglected community. And its members are aware of being neglected. Neglected by the government, ignored by the litterateurs, and forgotten by the social scientists, exploited by the big jewellery concerns with capital power, looked down upon by the educated gentry as an uncultured artisan group, the goldsmiths have an unenviable lot. The lot of the goldsmiths in the Sinthee-Dum Dum-Baranagar-Cossipore area is no better than that of goldsmiths in other parts of the country. The economic problems, social practices and cultural beliefs of the 1200 goldsmiths of this area, of course, cannot be regarded as identical with those of the goldsmiths in other areas. But the study of the lives of these goldsmiths of the northern fringe of Calcutta, I hope, will throw some light on the social lives of the goldsmith community in general. Steeped in superstition, deprived of the enlightenment that education brings, condemned to frustration that uncertain economic prospects generate, the goldsmiths deserve greater attention from the government, and our society ought to accord them a place befitting their artistic skill and social contribution.



## CHAPTER—IV

### PORTRAITS OF GOLDSMITHS

#### SOME CASE STUDIES

Though an obvious truism, it is worth repeating that a community is composed of individuals. And that lives of the individuals mirror the distinguishing features of their community. The goldsmith community of the Sinthee-Dum Dum-Baranagar-Cossipore area has its own distinguishing features as a community, and its distinctiveness as a community may become clearer to us if we have a close look at the lives of the individuals belonging to this community. The economic and family background, personal attitudes and orientations, etc, of individual goldsmiths are likely to tell a tale no less meaningful for understanding the goldsmiths than what emerges from statistical data about different aspects of their social life.

I am presenting below a bunch of case histories of individual goldsmiths of the locality with the object of acquainting the reader with the types of people who constitute the goldsmith community. The details of the case histories have been slightly changed, without affecting the essentials, so that the identity of the actual persons may not be disclosed.

#### 1. B.M. :

Aged about 50. His father was a goldsmith too. He and his younger brothers are continuing to work as goldsmiths after their father's death. He was studying in the I.A. class when his father died, and he had to give up his studies because of family responsibilities. He had to maintain a family of six persons then, including his widowed mother, his two younger brothers, and two unmarried sisters. Now the family size has become much larger. Besides his mother, his own wife and children, his brothers' wives and children also now belong to his family. His two sisters have gone to live with their husbands after their marriage. B.M. has inherited, alongwith his brothers, a two-storeyed ancestral house and some property, and he and his brothers earn about Rs. 2000/- per month from their workshop (after paying the *kārigars* their remuneration). He is polished in manners and refined in taste. B. M. is a popular figure in the area. He has liberal views in social matters, and is progressive in political outlook.

#### 2. P. S. :

P. S. is a young man of about 25 years. He is from a village in



the Midnapur district. As the little income that accrues to their family from cultivation is highly inadequate to keep all the family members ( his parents, one widowed aunt, two unmarried sisters, one very young brother) alive, he had to do something, no matter what, to earn some money. A relative of his works as a *kárigar* in a workshop here, and through him he secured the job of a *chchokrá* (a boy) in that workshop. Now he is a *kárigar* himself, earning about Rs. 250/- per month, out of which he sends about Rs. 170/- to his father. He can read and write in Bengali, and reads a Bengali newspaper almost regularly. His ambition is to become the owner of a workshop one day. He would prefer to marry within his caste, and, if possible, a village girl, because he does not have a high opinion of townfolk.

### 3. K.D. :

44 year old K.D. is a bachelor, and intends to remain so. Lives in a tenanted house along with his married younger brother and the brother's wife and children. K. D. is of a jovial temperament, and is fond of card-playing. He very scrupulously observes religious injunctions with regard to food, and firmly believes in palmistry, horoscope, and the efficacy of precious stones in bringing good luck. As a goldsmith he has the reputation of being an adept in engraving.

### 4. S. M. :

Aged about 52, but looks a little older. Originally from Dacca district in East Bengal, he came to Calcutta with his father at the age of 16. Once served as a restaurant boy, then as a biri worker. Later joined a gold-smith's workshop as a 'boy', and in course of time became a *kárigar*. S. M. is married and has 4 sons and 2 daughters. When the Gold Control Rules in 1963 made continuance in the goldsmith's profession nearly impossible for him, he tried his luck in other lines, with no success. As a seller of children's garments he made some loss. Then worked again as a biri worker for sometime. Fortunately, after a few months he began to get orders for ornaments, and could gradually become rehabilitated again as a goldsmith. He himself has read only up to Class IV. His sons are now in school. His intention is to train one of his sons as a goldsmith, and let 3 other sons join some service after they pass the School Final Examination.

### 5. B.D. :

Aged about 35. Not yet married. He is from the district of Hooghly. His father was a goldsmith, and, though old, his father still supervises the work of the shop. B.D. knows the goldsmith's work, and occasionally does work in his father's workshop. But he spends most of



the time in organisational work of the Swarna-Silpi Samiti. And this is not liked by his father. B.D. is a close sympathiser of a progressive party and his father is a staunch supporter of a conservative political party. The son is more or less caste-free in his attitude ; the father is intensely caste-minded. These differences often strain B.D's relations with his father. But as he is his father's only son, the father tolerates his way of life, grudgingly though.

#### 6. S. C. :

Belongs to a high caste and educated upto Class VIII. 42 years old. Originally from Howrah district, but his father shifted to Varanasi and settled there. S.C's father owned a small stationery shop at Varanasi, the income from which was barely sufficient to maintain the family (composed of S.C., his sister, and his parents). After his father's death, S.C. was unable to run the shop properly, and was in great financial difficulty. So he wound up the establishment at Varanasi, sold away the stock of goods in his shop at throw away prices, and returned to his ancestral home in Howrah district. A close acquaintance of S.C., belonging to his native place, who is a goldsmith in Sinthee, helped him to join a goldsmith's shop in that area as an apprentice. Now, S. C. is himself the owner of a small workshop. He is married and has two children. He lives in a tenanted flat close to his workshop.

#### 7. N. S. :

43 years old N.S. is a muslim by religion. He owns a one-room house or rather a shed in Calcutta. Besides himself working as a goldsmith in that room, with the assistance of a boy aged 13, he has tenanted a part of the room to another goldsmith. He belongs to a village in Hooghly district. His family, composed of his old parents, his wife and 3 children, and his younger brother lives in his village home. His father and younger brother are engaged in cultivation. N. S. goes to his village home at least once every month. He has not severed his links with agriculture, and though he himself cannot take part in cultivation, he keeps himself abreast with every development and problem of the cultivation of his family land. While his artisan hands are busy in shaping gold ornaments, his peasant mind dreams of golden harvests.

#### 8. G. M. :

Aged 64. Is a very respected personality in his locality. He read up to Class VIII, and was till a few years back actively involved in politics as a member of nationalist party. Now he is no longer in politics, and his present involvement is in the work of a religious sect.



G.M's grandfather left the traditional caste occupation, i.e., farming, and became a goldsmith. Since then goldsmithy has continued to be the family occupation. His father was a goldsmith, and so are G.M's two sons, both of whom are Matriculates. He himself still occasionally works in his shop, but work is now mostly done by his two sons.

9. P. M. : Aged 51. P. M. is no longer a goldsmith, though he once was, and his younger brother, who lives separately, still is. P. M. left goldsmithy in 1963 when the Gold Control Rules made the prospect very dismal for the goldsmiths. After leaving goldsmithy, he tried to join some service, and got the job of a teacher in a primary school. But the remuneration was not good, and he had a moderately large family to maintain. So he left that job and sought to try his luck in another line. He purchased some broiler hens and started selling eggs in the local market. From this modest beginning, he has been able to become the owner of a small but profitable poultry firm. He has no repentance for having left goldsmithy for good.

10. K. S. : A handsome youth of 28, K. S. works as *kārigar* in a pretty big workshop. Though uneducated, he is polished in manners. He has a flair for acting and plays the hero in amateur *Jatra* performances. He comes from a respectable family, and there are many well-educated people among his close relatives. He likes the goldsmith's work because fashioning artistic things gives him pleasure. But he seems to be suffering from a complex, and feels that his relatives look down upon him because of his profession. He sometimes thinks of leaving the present profession and joining a *Jatra* party as a professional. But he is afraid of taking a leap into an uncertain future.

11. R. K. : Aged 77. 5 sons 4 engaged in goldsmithy and 1 in service. Two nephews also work in his workshop. R. K. started work as a goldsmith's assistant at the age of 16, and gave up work due to old age about 7 years ago. Like most other old men, he is fond of recapitulating his past whenever he finds an interested listener. His grandfather was a blacksmith in his native village in Howrah district. R. K's father worked both as a blacksmith and a goldsmith. It was R. K. who for the first time in his family completely severed himself from blacksmithy. He has seen many major changes taking place in goldsmithy during his lengthy career as a goldsmith. When he started work, gold was about Rs. 25 per tola (*bhari*) and now it is more than a thousand rupees per tola. Silver also has now become much more costly than before. As a result of this fantastic rise in the price of the precious metals, heavy ornaments which R. K. once made are



now no longer in demand. Designs like biscuit necklace, cowrie necklace, etc, which he once used to make, have now become obsolete. R. K. is a veritable store-house of information about old designs of gold and silver ornaments and the old methods of making them.

12.N.M. : 30 years old N.M. is from the district of Burdwan. Poverty forced him to leave his ancestral village and to come to this city in search of employment. He found a berth in this craft through a distant relation who is a goldsmith. N. M. does not like the goldsmith's work, or, more specifically, the work of polishing which he does. He has to use acid for polishing and the acid fumes almost choke him. He coughs and frets and curses his lot while polishing ornaments, and pines for the sylvan rural setting in which he passed his boyhood. As a result of regularly inhaling acid fumes in course of his work, he developed lungs trouble, and was under medical treatment for about two months. Then he almost decided to leave the craft, and actually started the business of selling fruits. But after recovering from his illness, he has again resumed his polishing work. He says that he has come back to goldsmithy because selling fruits was not adequately remunerative. But the real reason, his close friends say, is that he actually developed a love for his profession (notwithstanding the health hazard), though N. M. himself never admits it. His wife is extremely unhappy about his return to polishing work, because she is afraid that his lungs trouble may relapse.

13. P. D. : P. D. is a boy of 14 years. He hails from a village in Midnapur district and is the 4th son of his father who is a poor peasant. The owner of the shop in which P. D. works also hails from the same village. P. D's father entreated the owner of the shop to employ P. D. as a 'boy' in his shop, and the owner agreed because he needed a 'boy' to help the *kárigars* in their work. P.D's job mainly consists in keeping the ornament-making implements neat and tidy and to cleanse the floor of the shop. He has, on occasions, also to carry ornaments to the polisher and to bring them back. When there is no work to do, he watches the *kárigars* fashioning gold ornaments with deft hands, because his aim is to become a *kárigar* one day. He sleeps at night in the covered verandah adjoining the workshop, and gets his meals at the owner's house. His working hours extend from 9 A.M. to 8 P.M. with an one-hour break for lunch at 12 noon, and he gets some leisure only after 8 P.M. when the shop closes. His work is, however, not strenuous, and all that he has to do is to attend to orders of the owner to bring tea or cigarettes from the nearby tea stall, and to hand over this or that implement to a



*kárigar* who needs it. P. D. earns only Rs. 30/- per month besides free food and lodging, and he has no sparetime for play with boys of his age-group in the locality. His only recreation is seeing a film occasionally in the local cinema house, and enjoying funny chats of the *kárigars* in the brief intervals of their work. Life here is now bit dull for P. D., but he knows that one day he will himself become a full-fledged goldsmith, and that prospect gives him impetus to endure the dullness that pervades his life today. And in any case his father will send him back to the workshop even if he tried to go back to his village home, to the merry company of his village chums, to the nostalgic village world of his childhood where he could swim at his pleasure in the *tál puku* (tank surrounded by tall palm trees), pluck mangoes from the branches of trees in the mango garden of the village, saunter aimlessly along the *áls* (narrow, elevated boundaries of paddy fields) of the paddy fields and the dusty paths winding through the village, P.D. knows almost instinctively that he has suddenly outgrown his childhood and he will have to become an adult sooner, much sooner, than many other boys of his age.

#### 14. C. P. :

C.P. is well-known in the area for his skill in enamelling or *miná*-work. A married man of 40 with 3 children, C.P. is doing enamelling work for the last 15 years. He can handle the colours very deftly, Particularly the red colour in his *miná*-work dazzles brightly and few enamellers in the area can use the red colour with such transparency and glaze. At first sight, one would mistake his enamelling work on a ring or a necklace as stone-setting work, so transparently are the colours used by him. As an individual he is of a very reserved nature, and talks only when talked to. The exact technique he uses for enamelling is a closely guarded secret and he is reluctant to enlighten anyone about the process followed by him, except in a very general way. As there are only a few enamellers in the area in comparison with a large number ornament-makers, his hands are always full with work, and that makes his income steady and assured.

15. G. D. : G. D., a middle-aged *kárigar*, is much respected by his fellow goldsmiths for his largeness of heart. Whenever anybody is in distress, G. D. will be by his side if he just gets the news. G. D. works hard and works well, but his income is not enough to ensure a fair standard of living for his family (composed of 5 persons). Now, 50, G. D. lives in a tenanted house, and thinks about the uncertain future



when he he will no longer be able to work, His eyesight is already failing, and the day is not far off when he will not be able to make the intricate designs in gold which he has been doing for so many years. He has two daughters to give in marriage. One of his two sons works as a *karigar* in another shop. The other son prefers to loiter about in the company of friends rather than learn any productive work. The future before G. D. is, thus, rather bleak, and with a sigh he sometimes says, "We work with the *nai* (*nehai* = anvil) all our life, and so finally our life ends in *nai* (wants)".



## APPENDIX—A

### Extracts From The Gold (Control) Act, 1968

(As modified up to the 1st September, 1975)

#### CHAPTER—I

#### PRELIMINARY

1. (b) “article” means any thing (other than ornament), in a finished form, made of, manufactured from or containing gold, and includes—(i) any gold coin, (ii) broken pieces of an article, but does not include primary gold ;

(c) “artisan” means a person (other than a certified goldsmith) who is employed by a licensed dealer, whether on cash or deferred payment or on commission, remuneration or other valuable consideration, to make, manufacture, prepare, repair, polish or process any article or ornament or to meet, process or convert gold for the purpose of making, manufacturing, preparing, repairing any article or ornament.

(d) “certified goldsmith” means a self-employed goldsmith who holds a valid certificate, referred to in Section 39.

(h) “dealer” means any person who carries on, directly or otherwise, the business of making, manufacturing, preparing, repairing, polishing, buying, selling, supplying, distributing, melting, processing or converting gold, whether for cash or for deferred payment or for commission, remuneration or other valuable consideration.....

(j) “gold” means gold, including its alloy (whether virgin, melted or re-melted, wrought or unwrought), in any shape or form of a purity of not less than nine carats and includes primary gold, article and ornament ;

(p) “ornament” means a thing, in a finished form, meant for personal adornment or for the adornment of any idol, deity or any other object of religious worship, made of, or manufactured from, gold, whether or not set with stones or gems (real or artificial), or with pearls (real, cultured or imitation) or with all or any of them, and includes parts, pendants or broken pieces of ornament.

(r) “primary gold” means gold in any unfinished or semi-finished form and includes ingots, bars, blocks, slabs, billets, shots, pellets, rods, sheets, foils and wires.....

(u) “standard gold bar” means primary gold of such fineness, dimensions, weight and description and containing such particulars as may be prescribed ;.....



## CHAPTER—VIII

### CERTIFIED GOLDSMITHS

39. (1) Save as otherwise provided in this Act, no person shall commence, or carry on, business as a goldsmith after the commencement of this Act, unless he holds a valid certificate recognizing him as a goldsmith.

(2) The certificate referred to in sub-section (1).....

(b) shall be valid until the death of the holder, or the cancellation thereof, whichever is earlier,.....

(3) Every certificate granted to a person under Part XIIA of the Defence of India Rules, 1962, or under the Gold (Control) Ordinance, 1968, recognising him as a goldsmith, shall, if in force immediately before the commencement of this Act, continue to be in force until the death of the holder, or the cancellation thereof, whichever is earlier.

(4) On and from the commencement of this Act, the following classes of persons shall be eligible to apply for the grant of a certificate, namely : —

(a) a person who had been carrying on business as a goldsmith for more than a year immediately before the commencement of Part XIIA of the Defence of India Rules, 1962.

(b) a person who, at the commencement of this Act, is a member of the family of a certified goldsmith and had been assisting him in his work as a goldsmith for not less than one year.

(c) a person who has received any loan from the Government under any scheme for the rehabilitation of goldsmiths and has made, within six months from the commencement of this Act, an application for the grant of a certificate :

Provided that a certificate granted to such a person shall be cancelled unless he repays the loan, within a period of two years from the date of the grant of such certificate, in such instalments as the authority by which the loan was granted may specify in this behalf ;

(d) an artisan if he surrenders his identify card as an artisan ;

(e) a person who belongs to a prescribed category or class to which in the opinion of the Central Government, the certificate may be granted.

#### **Explanation :**

A person who is engaged as a hired labourer by a certified goldsmith shall not be eligible to receive a certificate under this section.



(5) Every application for the grant of a certificate referred to in sub-section (1) shall be made in such form, in such manner and on payment of such fee, not exceeding ten rupees, as may be prescribed.

(7) Every certified goldsmith shall have in his possession the certificate granted to him while he carries on business as such goldsmith and shall produce it for inspection on demand by any Gold Control Officer.

(8) A certified goldsmith may engage not more than one hired labourer to assist him in his work as a goldsmith but such hired labourer shall not make, manufacture, prepare, repair or process any article or ornament.

40. A certified goldsmith may make, manufacture, prepare, repair, polish or process ornaments and may also repair or polish articles but shall not, unless authorised by the Administrator so to do, make, manufacture or prepare any primary gold or article.

[ 'The Administrator' referred to in the above section means the Administrator appointed by the Central Government for carrying out the purposes of this Gold (Control) Act. Chapter II of the Act deals with the Administrator and Gold Control Officers. ]

41. A certified goldsmith—

(a) may—

(i) buy standard gold bars from a licensed dealer or refiner,

(ii) accept or otherwise receive any article, ornament or primary gold from a licensed dealer for the purpose of making, manufacturing, preparing, or repairing ornaments for such licensed dealer.

(iii) accept or otherwise receive, subject to the provisions of section 8, from any other person any article or ornament for the purpose of making, manufacturing or preparing ornaments for such person or for the purpose of repairing or polishing such article or ornament ;

(b) shall not, save as otherwise provided in the Act, buy or agree to buy or sell or agree to sell any primary gold, article or ornament.

42. No certified goldsmith shall either own or have at any time in his possession, custody or control any quantity of—

(i) standard gold bars in excess of one hundred grammes, or

(ii) any quantity of primary gold ( including standard gold bars ) in excess of three hundred grammes.



## CHAPTER—XI

### ACCOUNTS AND RETURNS

55. (1) Every licensed dealer, every licensed refiner and every certified goldsmith shall keep, in such form and in such manner as may be prescribed, a true and complete account of the gold owned, possessed, held, controlled, bought or otherwise acquired, or accepted or otherwise received, or sold, delivered, transferred or otherwise disposed of, by him in his capacity as such licensed dealer or refiner or certified goldsmith, as the case may be, and different forms of accounts may be prescribed for different classes or licensed dealers, refiners or certified goldsmith.

.....

56. (i) Every licensed dealer, every licensed refiner and every certified goldsmith shall furnish to the Administrator such returns as to the quantity, description, and other prescribed particulars of gold owned, possessed, held or controlled by him, in such form and within such time as may be prescribed and different returns may be prescribed for different classes or licensed dealers or refiners or certified goldsmiths.

.....

## CHAPTER—XII

### ENTRY, SEARCH, SEIZURE AND ARREST

58. (1) Any Gold Control Officer authorised in this behalf by the Administrator may, if he has any reason to suspect that any provision of this Act has been, or is being, or is about to be, contravened, enter and search, at any reasonable time, any refinery or the business premises of a licensed dealer or a certified goldsmith. ....

66. (1) If any Gold Control Officer has reason to believe that in respect of any gold any provision of this Act has been, or is being, or is attempted to be, contravened, then he may seize—

- (a) such gold along with the package, covering or receptacle, if any (and the contents thereof), in which the gold is found ;
- (b) any other goods in which any quantity of such gold has been mixed. ....

68. (i) Any Gold Control Officer authorised by the Administrator in this behalf may, if he has reasons to believe that any person has contravened, or is contravening, or is, about to contravene any provision of this Act, arrest any such person, and shall as soon as possible inform



him of the grounds for such arrest and shall take such arrested person to the nearest magistrate within a period of twentyfour hours and no such person shall be detained in custody beyond the said period without the authority of a magistrate.

### CHAPTER—XIII CONFISCATION AND PENALTIES

71. (1) Any gold in respect of which any provision of this Act or any rule or order made thereunder has been, or is being, or is attempted to be, contravened, together with any package, covering or receptacle in which such gold is found, shall be liable to confiscation ;  
.....

77. No confiscation made or penally imposed under this Act shall prevent the infliction of any other punishment to which the person affected thereby is liable under the provisions of this Act or under any other law.

### CHAPTER—XIV ADJUDICATION, APPEAL AND REVISION

78. Any confiscation may be adjudged or penalty may be imposed under this Act.

(a) without limit, by a Gold Control Officer not below the rank of a Collector of Central Excise or of Customs ;

(b) subject to such limits as may be specified in this behalf, by such other Gold Control Officer, not below the rank of superintendent of Central Excise, as the Central Government may, by notification, authorise in this behalf.....

80. (1) Any person aggrieved by any decision or order made under this Act, may prefer an appeal—

(a) Where the decision or order has been made by a Collector of Central Excise or of Customs, as the case may be, to the Administrator ;

(b) where the decision or order has been made by any Officer below the rank of a Collector of Central Excise or of Customs, as the case may be—



(i) to the Collector of Central Excise or Customs, as the case may be, to whom the Officer who made such decision or order is subordinate, or

(ii) if the Central Government so directs, to the Appellate Collector of Customs, within a period of three months from the date of communication to such person of the decision or order :

.....

## CHAPTER—XV

### OFFENCES AND THEIR TRIAL

85. (1) Whoever, in contravention of the provisions of this Act, or any rule or order made thereunder, —

(i) makes manufactures, prepares or processes any primary gold, or

(ii) owns or has in his possession, custody or control any primary gold, or

(iii) buys or otherwise, or accepts or otherwise receives, or agrees to buy or otherwise acquire or to accept or otherwise receive, any primary gold, or

(iv) sells, delivers, transfers or otherwise disposes of, or agrees to sell, deliver, transfer or otherwise dispose of, or exposes or offers for sale, delivery, transfer or disposal, any primary gold, or

.....

(vi) makes, manufactures, prepares, repairs, polishes or processes, or places any order for the making, manufacturing, preparing, repairing, polishing or processing of, any article or ornaments, or

(vii) buys or otherwise acquires, or accepts or otherwise receive, or sells, delivers, transfers or otherwise disposes of, or exposes or offers for sale, delivery, transfer or other disposal, any article or ornament, or

(viii) owns or has in his possession, custody or control any article or ornament, or.....

shall, without prejudice to any other action that may be taken under this Act, be punishable.....

(a) if the offence is under clause (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), or (viii)..... and the value of the gold involved therein exceeds one lakh of rupees, with imprisonment for a term which may extend to seven years and with fine ;



Provided that in the absence of special and adequate reasons to the contrary to be recorded in the judgment of the court such imprisonment shall not be for a term of less than six months :

(b) in any other case, with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.

.....

86. Whoever fails or omits to make a declaration\*.....without any reasonable cause or makes a declaration which is either false or which he knows or has reason to believe to be incorrect, shall, without prejudice to any other action that may be taken under this Act, be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years and also with fine.

[\*“Declaration” means a declaration which is required by this Act or was required by rule 126-1 of the Defence of India Rules, 1962, or the Gold (Control) Ordinance, 1968, to be made with regard to the ownership, possession, custody or control of gold. Sec 2 (i) ]

87. Whoever omits without reasonable cause to maintain accounts or to submit any return in accordance with the provisions of this Act or any rule or order made thereunder or who keeps any accounts or makes any statement in any return which is false or which he knows or has reason to believe to be incorrect, shall, without prejudice to any other action that may be taken under this Act be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years and also with fine, and in the event of a second or subsequent offence, with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than six months but not more than three years and also with fine.

.....



## APPENDIX-B

### THE PRICE OF GOLD IN INDIA SINCE-1900

Year	Rs. As. ( Per Tola )	Year	Rs. P. (Per 10 grammes)*
1900	22—3	1950-51	97.28
1906	21—6	1955-56	82.18
1916	27—14	1960-61	114.91
1926	21—5	1965-66	77.78
1936	32—8	1970-71	184.96
1946	51	1972-73	242.23
		1973-74	369.23
		1974-75	519.10
		1975-76	544.00
		1976-77	549.54
		1977-78	600.88
		1978-79	1020.70

[ Source : 'Aksho Bachcharer Sonar Dam' by Saroj Upadhyay in 'Amrita' ( Bengali Weekly, 16th November, 1979. )

	Ans.	Pies
* 10 grammes =	13	— 3
1 tola =	16	— —



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### BOOKS IN ENGLISH :

1. Roy, Sudhansu Kumar 'The Artisan Castes of West Bengal and Their Craft' in 'The Tribes and Castes of West Bengal. Census : West Bengal'. Land and Land Revenue Department. A. Mitra. West Bengal Govt. Printing Press, Alipore, West Bengal 1953.
2. Mukherjee, T. N. 'Art-manufactures of India'. 1888. Reprinted by Navrang, New Delhi, 1974.
3. Chattopadhyay, Kamaladevi. 'The Glory of Indian Handicrafts', Indian Book Library, New Delhi. 1976.
4. Dongerkery Kamala S. 'Jewelry and Personal Adornment in India', Indian Council for Cultural Relations, New Delhi, 1970.
5. Mehta, Rustam J. 'Handicrafts and Industrial Arts of India', Taraporevala, Bombay, 1960.
6. Jamila, Brij Bhusan. 'Indian Jewellery : Ornaments and Decorative Designs', Taraporevala, Bombay.
7. Coomarswami, A. K. 'Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon', Today and Tomorrow Printers and Publishers, New Delhi, 1971, [ Phillips, Edinburgh, 1913. ]
8. The New Encyclopaedia Britannica. Vol. 10.
9. Thomas, P. 'Hindu Religious Customs and Manners', Taraporevala, Bombay, 1971 (5th ed.)
10. Dubois, J. P. 'Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies', Mamta Publications, New Delhi, 1973 (Indian reprint), [Published by Clarendon Press in 1897. ]
11. Hendley, T. H. 'Indian Jewellery'. (extracted from the Journal of Indian Art and Industry, 1906-1909), W. Griggs and sons, London, 1909.
12. Govinda Chandra, Rai. 'Studies in the Development of Ornaments and Jewellery in Proto-historic India,' Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, 1964.
13. Hughes, Graham. 'The Art of Jewelry : a Survey of Craft and Creation', Studio Vista, London, 1972.
14. Evans, J. 'A History of Jewellery', Faber and Faber, London, 1953.



15. Higgins, R. 'Jewellery from Classical Lands', Trustees of the British Museum, London, 1969.
16. Giltay-Nijssen, L. 'Jewellery', Merlin Press, London, 1964.
17. Rosenthal, R. 'Jewellery in Ancient Times', Cassell, London, 1973.
18. Bovin, M. 'Jewelry making : for Schools, Trades and Craftsmen'. Bailey Bros and Swinfen, London, 1962.
19. Morton, P. 'Contemporary Jewellery : a Studio Handbook', Holt, Rinehart and Winston, N. Y. etc, 1969.
20. Mason, A. F. 'An Illustrated Dictionary of Jewellery', Osprey, Reading, 1973.
21. The Gold (Control) Act, 1968 (As Modified up to the 1st September, 1975).
22. Banerjee, N. 'Laws on Gold Control', International Law Book Centre, Calcutta, 1976 ed.

#### BOOKS AND JOURNALS IN BENGALI :

1. Vedantatirtha, Girish Chandra, 'Prachin Silpa Parichaya', Subarna Rekha, 1379 (First published in 1329 B.S.).
2. Haldar, Asit Kumar. 'Bharater Karu-Silpa', Calcutta University, 1939.
3. Bhattacharya, Bholanath, 'Silpa Bhabana', Indian Publications, Calcutta, 1975.
4. Sen, Dinesh Chandra, 'Vanga Sahitya Parichaya', Part I and II, Calcutta University, 1914.
5. Sen, Sukumar, 'Banga Bhumika, 300 B.C. to 1250 A.D.', Eastern Publishers, Calcutta, 1974.
6. Das Mazumdar, Dhananjaya, 'Bangla O Bangalir Itihas', Vol. II, Sambodhi Publication Private Ltd, Calcutta 1366 B.S.
7. De, Sushil Kumar, 'Bangla Prabod, Chcharha O Chalti Katha', A. Mukherjee and Co, Calcutta, 1352 B.S.
8. Ray, Niharanjan, 'Banglar Itihas' (Adiparva), Book Emporium, Calcutta, 1356 B.S.
9. Sen, Dinesh Chandra, Bandyopadhyaya, Charuchandra, and Basu, Rishikesh. (ed). 'Kabikankan Chandi,' Calcutta University, Part I, 1924, Part II, 1926.
10. Swarna Silpi, Bengali Monthly of the goldsmiths, ed. by Sunil Chatterjee, Calcutta. (Available numbers)
11. Purashri, Bengali fortnightly organ of the Calcutta Corporation. ed. by Samaresh Chattopadhyay. Saturday, March 24, 1979.



# [A] **SOME BENGALI ORNAMENTS**

BALA

EARRINGS

TIKLI

NOSEPIN

NOLAK



BISCUIT HAR



NAUTH



SINTHI



COWRIE HAR



CHIRUNI



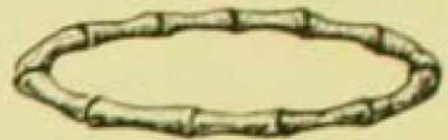
HAIR PIN & FLOWERS



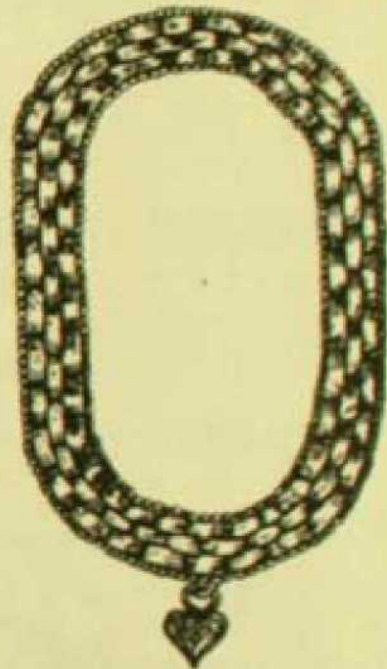
MAKRI



BAMBOO BANGLE



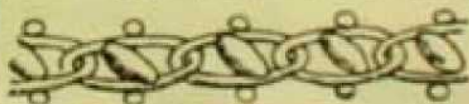
CHATAI NECKLACE



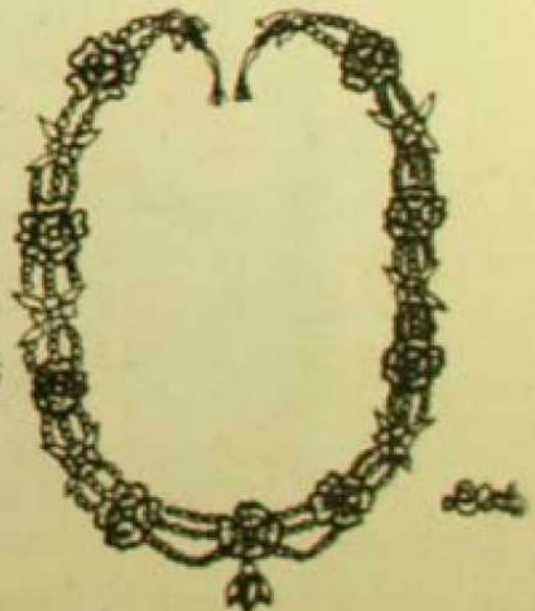
PUSHPA HAR



TETULPATA HAR



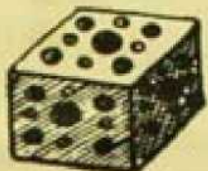
KHEJUR CHARI  
NECKLACE





# GOLDSMITHS' TOOLS AND IMPLEMENTS

KACHLA



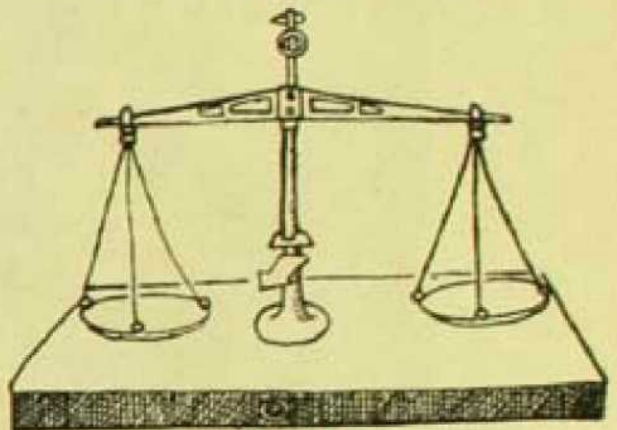
LAMP



DIE



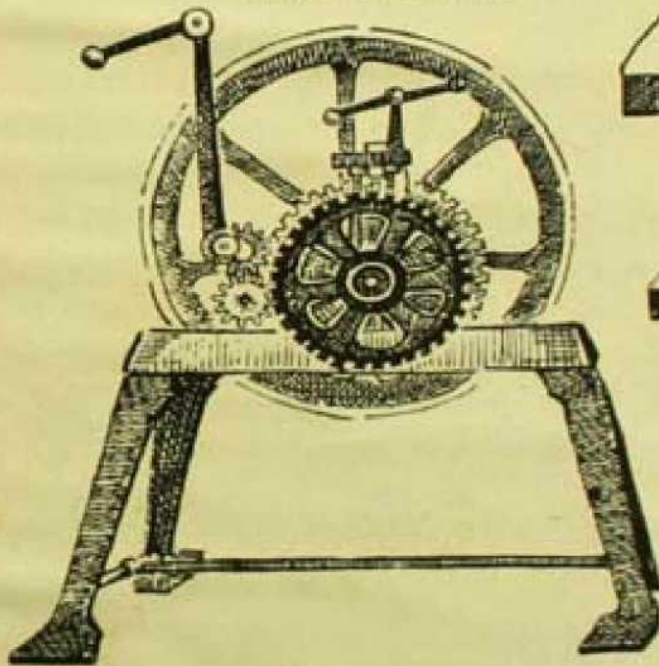
WEIGHING BALANCE



TAR DALNA



PAT DALNA



NEHAI



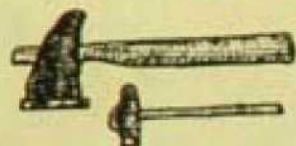
CRUCIBLE



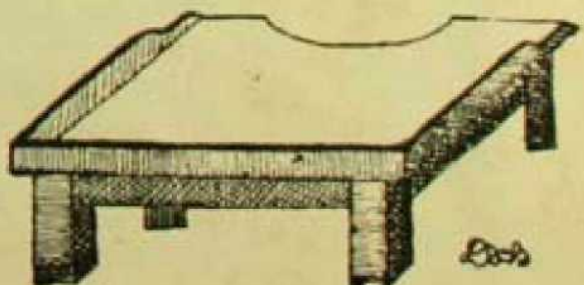
FILE



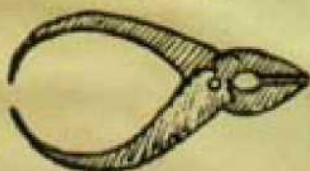
HAMMERS



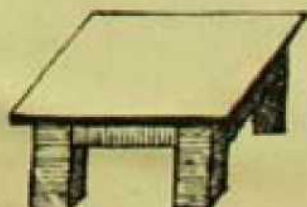
DESK



KATURI



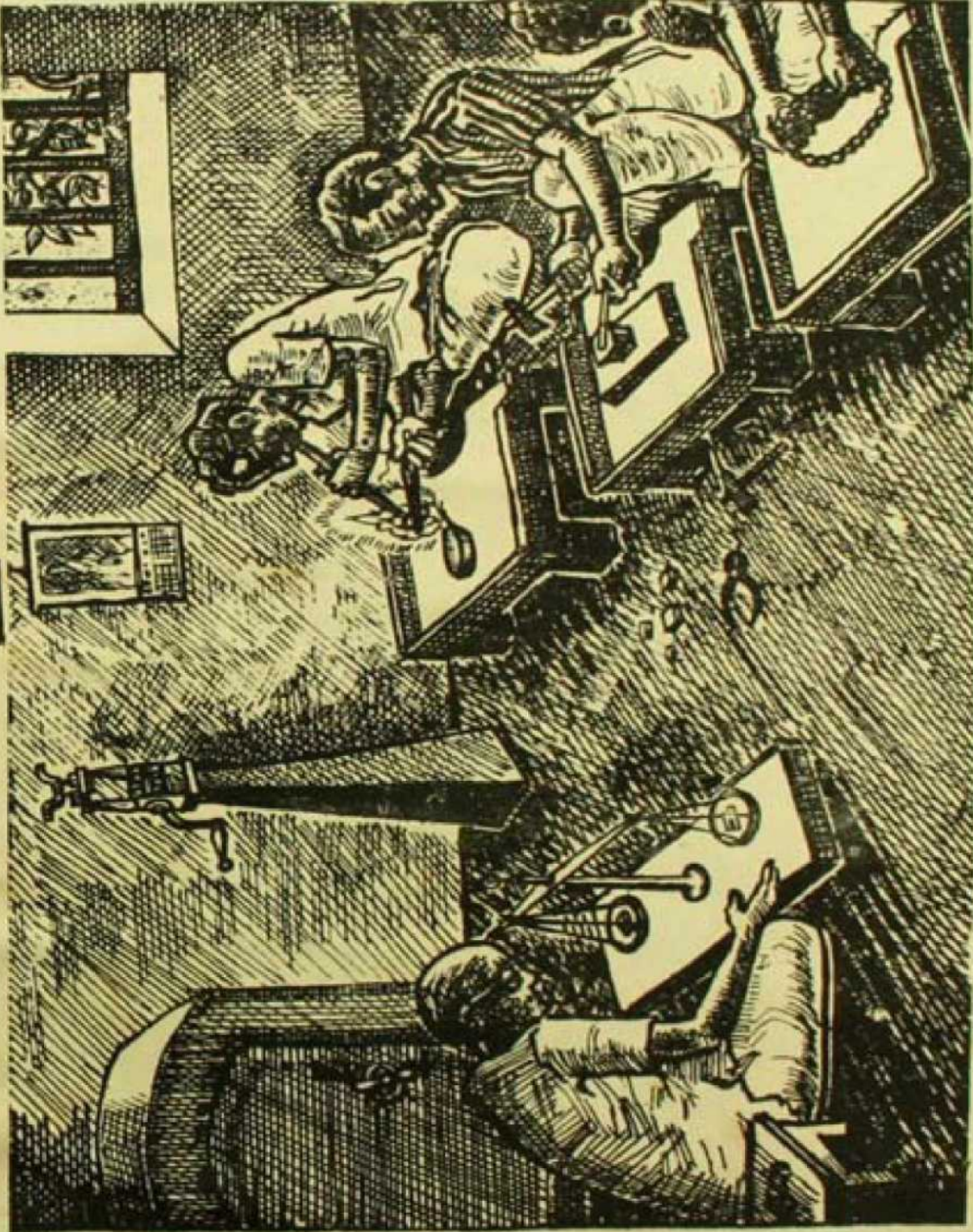
STOOL



End



C



*GOLDSMITHS AT WORK*



## ERRATA

- Page 18, 3rd line—'interesting' in place of 'insteresting'  
15th line—'similarly' in place of 'simlarly'.
- Page 19, 11th line—'to fall back upon' in place of 'fall back upon'
- Page 22, 34th line—'die' in place of 'dice'.
- Page 27, 12th line—'than' in place of 'them'.
- Page 37, last line—'the goldsmiths' in place of 'he goldsmiths'.
- Page 38, 5th line—'chiselling' in place of 'chiseling'.
- Page 39, 5th line—'A goldsmith' in place of 'A goldsmiths'.
- Page 40, 24th line—'wife' in place of 'wifc'.
- Page 41, 3rd line—'unmarried' in place of 'urmarried'.
- Page 42, 38th line—'a nationalist party' in place of  
'nationalist party'.
- Page 45, 5th line—'a bit' in place of 'bit'.  
30th line—'ornament' in place of 'ornement'.  
34th line—'respected' in place of 'repected'.